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March 1994

CDXC - The UK DX Foundation

Issue 88

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**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: APRIL 7th**

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## CHILTERN DX CLUB - The UK DX Foundation - Aims and Objectives

**From the Constitution:** *"The aim of the Club will be to promote excellence in HF operating, particularly DXing, through mutual assistance and by encouraging support of DXpeditions, the issue of achievement awards, or whatever other means is deemed to be appropriate"*

**From the Prospectus:** *"CDXC caters for amateurs with an interest in competitive activity on the HF bands (DXing, contesting, award chasing, etc.)"*

**Membership:** Membership of CDXC is open to any amateur or SWL who has 100 DXCC countries confirmed on the HF bands. New members must be proposed by at least two club members.

**Subscriptions:** The annual subscription is currently set at £10.00 for UK members, and £15.00 for overseas members. The subscription for new members joining between 1st January and 30th June is 50% of the annual subscription. Subscriptions become due on July 1st in each year, and should be sent to the Treasurer (address above).

**Newsletter:** This newsletter is published six times per year. Articles for publication should be sent to the Newsletter Editor (address above) by the published deadline.



## EDITORIAL

### Alan Jubb, G3PMR

Wow! Another successful major DXpedition has been and gone. 3Y0PI really put on a good show, and are said to have made over 65,000 QSOs. Conditions left something to be desired, especially after the first week. I guess that everyone who wanted to managed to work them on at least one band or another. A number of CDXC members made it to achieve their *last one* - congratulations to them. I suppose that 160m was a bit of a disappointment, with only a few Europeans making it. The team had to cope with pretty atrocious WX conditions throughout their stay, and this persisted through the dismantling and packing of the station. The Russian ship, the Akademik Federov, arrived on Wednesday 16th, but loading was not completed until 2300 on Sunday 20th. It turns out that six of the team were unable to embark due to thick fog and yet another snow storm, and had to spend four days on the island with only a single tent and minimum facilities. Donations are still welcome (and deserved), and may be sent to "VZW Peter I, Antarctic DXpedition", bank account number 290.053.3529.50 of the Banque Generale, Belgium.

As was briefly mentioned in the recent Bulletin, both Phil Weaver, VS6CT, and Steve Telenius-Lowe, P29DX will be in the UK shortly. To celebrate Phil's MBE and Steve's home-coming, Bren, G4DYO has arranged a dinner at the Excelsior Hotel, Heathrow, on April 1st. At the time of writing, 20 Dxers are planning to attend - anyone else wishing to attend should contact Bren directly.

As a result of direct action by CDXC and the RSGB HF Committee, supported by G4DYO, G3KMA, and G4PFF, there now *will* be a WARC bands antenna (Cushcraft

A3WS) on the forthcoming Banaba DXpedition. The following bodies/individuals have generously contributed to the antenna appeal:

CDXC, RSGB HF Committee, G3KMA, G4DYO, G3NOF, G4AFJ, G4BWP, G3RTE, G3PMR, G4PFF. However, there is still a shortfall, and further donations would be welcomed. Please send to G4PFF, marked "Antenna Fund"

The target, which has not quite been achieved, is to raise sufficient funds to purchase the antenna in the USA, and have it shipped direct to a safe QTH in Tarawa. The antenna will remain the property of CDXC, and will be kept at the Tarawa QTH for safe keeping and authorised use by other DXpeditions to Pacific islands.

CDXC members will be sad to hear of the death of CDXC member John Woodham, G4IJW, of a heart attack on 25th January. Our condolences to John's widow, Chris.

Walvis Bay, ZS9, and Penguin Islands, ZS0, look like becoming the next two countries to be deleted from the current DXCC countries list, as the Republic of South Africa is scheduled to hand over both to Namibia at the end of February. However, it is possible that this may not occur on time, as the negotiations between RSA and Namibia are apparently not yet complete. When the hand over does eventually occur, they will no longer qualify for separate DXCC status, although no formal announcement has been made to that effect. Also, Penguin Island will no longer count for IOTA AF-055, but will become part of the Atlantic South Coast Group under Namibia, which is currently un-numbered. It is rumoured that DJ6SI will stay on for 2 days after 28th February, so if the transfer is achieved on that date, there will be an immediate opportunity to work a new one!

That's all for this time. 73 Alan, G3PMR.



## JOTTINGS- David Mann, G0HXN

Well here we go again, another major DXpedition, at least with this one I have been at home and been able to listen to the build up to 3Y, as much as I admire these guys who go to these far flung places for our enjoyment and egos, I sometimes wonder if it is really is worth it. 3Y0PI came really on stream this morning 2 Feb, and immediately the band was full of the usual idiots including several G stations (who have identified themselves - I assume the callsigns are correct) - they will receive a private letter from me. Also, umpteen Southern European policeman, and the whole remit of tuners, and at this moment a well known American Station, a W2 who sends a tremendous signal into the UK, is at the moment singing, which brings out the other idiots who cause so much QRM trying to shut him up. It really turns the whole operation into a farce. 3Y0PI can be heard quite plainly calling by numbers, and announcing the QSX and it never fails to amaze me that when 4's are called, you can log every number in the book calling on the wrong frequency. I sometimes wonder if I have got it wrong, and everybody else is doing it right. But enough of that, I shall wait a few days and see if the propagation will improve to the UK, at the moment 0808 on Wed 2 Feb it seems to be moving round to the East fairly rapidly, the propagation forecast from 3Y can only be a educated guess, but it seems to be reasonably accurate so far. I am now listening to the Italians on .195 discussing the shift in propagation yet 4K1F from South Shetland on CW is a real solid signal here at the moment, I hope 3Y is that clear on the key, and 4K1F is calling CQ with very few takers,

must still be rare one for most especially on CW.

Many thanks to all of you who wrote into me this last few months, some very interesting stuff indeed, including a response from Gibraltar for application forms to join the RSGB, thanks to January's newsletter.

There is at this moment T9S from Sarajevo putting out a huge signal to celebrate the Winter Olympics ten years ago. The imagination boggles, in the midst of chaos an amateur decides to celebrate, hey ho.

I have included a letter from Mike G4IUF regarding the supply of a PSU from CDXC to ZK1CG Victor, please can I have your comments either to me QTHR or on the Cluster as this item will be on the agenda of the next Committee meeting.

As you may know Ian G4LJF if visiting sunnier climes for several months but any orders for QSL cards can be passed onto his son for onward transmission. Any Cluster mail for him please send to G3WGV. I will be at home for the next few months getting over an operation so hopefully I will be able to play radio, and get some elusive ones tucked under the belt.

Don't forget make your bookings for the IHFC at Windsor later in the year, adverts appearing soon, it's Happy Birthday to IOTA so it's going to be busy. Good DX, by the time you read this you will all be awaiting your 3Y QSL's !!! hope you were successful (Would you believe a GM calling CQ DX on .195) 73 Dave.



## **ZK1CG - Victor Rivera - Supply of PSU for Linear by CDXC.**

Dear OM,

I present for your consideration the above. Victor was extremely active on the amateur bands prior to the loss of his power supply, due to voltage spikes, and gave me, and many others, ZK1 on 80 metres.

I have made enquiries, and, it would appear that Henry Radio in LA would be able to supply a suitable supply (30A at 240V), for c\$350 (£242 at 1.45 exchange rate).

I have no doubt that Victor's QSLs could be suitably annotated, and, should the Committee approve this donation, will again contact him to facilitate this.

As a starter I will pledge \$50 in support if this is approved, either as a CDXC donation, or as a funding project for the members.

Knowing Victor personally, and having operated from his QTH, I can vouch for his continued activity, and dedication to the needy.

Obviously any supply supplied should be suitably protected against any further damage due to the somewhat variable mains supply in Raratonga.

Raratonga is an optional stop over on Air New Zealand flights, and also BA flights to and from NZ and Australia, so delivery should present no real problems, given the tendency of the membership to travel fairly widely. If there is a problem,

ZD8VJ will be a fairly regular traveller between UK and KH8 and could probably assist.

Yours, 73, Mike Parker, G4IUF

*(Ed: Please send donations to G4PFF, marked "Power Supply" so as not to confuse them with the antenna donations)*

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## **PETER 1st ISLAND - A Bit of History - UK Packet Cluster Network.**

You've worked them on all the bands, but how much do you know about Peter 1st island? Here's a little background, courtesy ON4UN and ON4WW.

As we all know, Peter I is a Norwegian possession, as is Bouvet island, another rare DX spot in the Antarctic region. It lies at about 68 degrees South latitude and approximately 90 degrees West, which is about 3 to 4 days sailing (1650 km line of sight distance) from King George island, which is located on the tip of the Antarctic peninsula.

The island is 23 km long and 10 km wide, and consists of a 1600 m high extinct volcano, the Lars Christen mountain. One part of the island coast consists of high and inaccessible cliffs, while a large glacier spreads over much of the Northern part of the island. The island is inhabited by tens of thousands of birds, as well as a small colony of penguins. It is on the glacier in the Northern part of the island, some 300 m from the tip of the glacier, where the 3Y0PI camp was erected.

The island was discovered in 1821 by Von Bellinghausen, a Russian naval



officer exploring the Antarctic region for Czar Alexander I. He named the island after the Russian Czar Peter the Great or Peter I. Von Bellinghausen never landed on Peter I.

The second visit to Peter I dates back to 1927, when a Norwegian Captain Anderessen, but this party could not land on the island either. Two years later, in 1929 a scientific expedition from the Norwegian ship *Norvegia* landed on the island. After this landing Norway claimed Peter I as Norwegian territory (1931). The second time Norwegians landed on Peter I was in 1948.

The third visit ON the island was by LA1EE and LA2GV in 1987. Einar and Kaare made some 16,000 QSOs from the island, on all bands. I remember working them on all bands excepted 160 m. From Europe, only OH1XX made it on 160 during this first DXpedition.

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### **ASIAN UPDATE - K3ZO** **(UK PacketCluster Network)**

The following information was supplied by K3ZO, following his recent operation as HS0ZAR.

#### **Bangladesh**

I had a long QSO with Sharif, S21AS. Since the Bangladesh Government has no licensing exam of its own, last year a VEC run by the FAIRS Foundation (Info available from N4VA) visited Bangladesh and gave the US exam while there. 17 Bangladeshi nationals passed and got their US licenses. The Bangladesh Government is gradually licensing these hams in what appears to be a lengthy

process (probably a security background check is required first). So far S21AM, AR, AS and AT have received their calls. S21A and S21B were previously licensed and are also active. The S21s hope that another VEC can visit Dhaka soon as there are many others now ready to take their examinations. Meanwhile the S21Z-series calls reserved for foreign DXpeditioners has already been used up (S21ZZ was part of a group of JAs there recently) so the Bangladesh authorities have begun using the S21Y-series for this purpose. The last known DXpedition call was S21YD issued to an SM.

#### **India**

I had a long QSO with VU2ICC, Secretary of his state's branch of the National Institute of Amateur Radio (NIAR). He reports that there are three classes of license:

Grade II is the lowest, and allows 50 watts on VHF/HF. Before you can operate phone you must make 100 QSOs on CW. Next is the Grade I which allows 150 watts. The highest class is Advanced which allows 400 watts. Grade II hams were previously limited to 40 meters only on HF but that restriction no longer exists. There are now a total of about 6000 hams in India, but of those only 2000 or so have been able to obtain rigs and get on the air. (Comment: There is really a lot of VU activity now. Many more VUs heard on the air than during my previous visits to Thailand.)

#### **India National Hamfest**

VU2ICC informed me that this year the National Institute of Amateur Radio's annual convention (the India equivalent of Dayton) will be held on 9 and 10 April



in the city of Bangalore (which is India's equivalent of Silicon Valley). For those yearning to attend an exotic hamfest, more information can be obtained from the Secretary, National Institute of Amateur Radio, 860 14th Cross, Mahalaxmi Layout, Bangalore 560 058, India.

## **Taiwan**

I had the opportunity to have several long chats with Shane, BV2FA, editor of the amateur radio magazine in Taiwan. He reports that at this time there are exactly 1,381 licensed amateurs in Taiwan. There is only one class of license in Taiwan so all of them have HF privileges. Examinations are given only once per year; this year's examination will take place in April or May. (The growth of amateur radio in Taiwan could be seen graphically when I tuned the bands in Thailand. At almost any given moment there are 5 or 6 BVs operating on 15/20/40 meters.)

## **Nepal**

I talked at length with Satis, 9N1AA, and Suresh, 9N1HA, who passed on the following information about amateur radio in Nepal. The first ever amateur radio examination in Nepal was held last year. Of the 17 applicants, four passed the theory/regulations exam. Of these four, three successfully passed the 12 w.p.m. Morse Code examination. They are 9N1AA and 9N1HA, who already have their own rigs and are on the air, and Gurul, 9N1RB, who doesn't have his rig yet but operates at times from the others' rigs. In addition, there is a resident Japanese YL in Nepal, Kiyoko, 9N1KY. In early January a Japanese DXpedition was held using the call

9N1WU. The Nepali hams have formed a radio society, the Nepal Amateur Radio League (NARL). The NARL's address is P. O. Box 4292, Kathmandu, which is also the QSL address given out by 9N1AA and 9N1HA. Foreign amateurs visiting Nepal can obtain a temporary license from the Ministry of Communications for the equivalent of about \$50 US. They are welcome to use the 9N1AA or 9N1HA stations. If, however, they bring in their own rigs the fee is about \$250 US. There will be another amateur radio examination in June or July and thus far there are 25 applicants to take it.

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## **G3PJT Visit to Bermuda**

Bob, G3PJT will be visiting Bermuda from 8th-17th March, and expects to sign G3PJT/VP9, although he may have a full VP9 call. Bob plans to be active in the Commonwealth Contest (12/13 March), when he will operate from the shack of VP9AD, and would like to work as many CDXC members as possible on all five bands, please (10/15/20/40/80m). Outside of the contest, Bob will expect to be active on 40m and the WARC bands.

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## **POSSIBLE IOTA OPERATION from ABU 'ALI - *UK Packet Cluster Network.***

Ibrahim, 7Z1IS reports that there is a strong possibility of a trip to activate ABU 'ALI Island. Abu 'Ali is in the Persian Gulf Group, and would be a new IOTA reference. The trip will start around March 10th and will last for 7 to 10 days. Ibrahim claims that this will be the first IOTA operation from an HZ island.



## RSGB 1994 International HF and IOTA Convention & IOTA's 30th Birthday Party

- **Dates:** 7,8 & 9 October 1994.
- **Location:** The Beaumont Conference Centre, Old Windsor, Berks located close to the M25 and Heathrow Airport.
- **Sponsors:** Martin Lynch and Trio-Kenwood UK.
- **The Organising Committee:**  
Roger G3KMA, David G3OUF, Neville G3NUG (Chairman), Don G3OZF, Alan G3PMR, Fred G4BWP, Mike G4PFF and Dave G0HXN.

All are active DXers and represent the various RSGB HF Committees and CDXC.

- **Special features:**  
IOTA's 30th birthday party on Friday evening 7 October including a buffet supper and some interesting entertainment.

Saturday evening DX dinner.

Ladies programme.

Major raffle prizes.

- **Programme:**  
This year's lecture programme will start at 09.30 on Saturday 8 October and run through to the raffle at around 16.00 on Sunday 9 October. There will be three lecture streams throughout this period. Two streams will be devoted to HF and one principally to IOTA.

Each stream has seven lecture slots so there are 21 slots in total, some talks will be given twice and delegates can of course switch streams.

We are making good progress with the programme which should appeal to all interested in HF. The programme will be a broad one and will include talks on recent DXpeditions including 3Y0PI, equipment, antennas, computers, contesting and data communications.

Part of the programme will be directed at the new DXer and should appeal to those starting out to work their first 100 countries. Learn some of the tricks of the trade from recently licensed amateurs who have already established themselves in the DX field.

Another topic will be "Computers in the Shack". Hear about hardware and software selection, the many applications now in use in the amateur field as well as possible future trends.

- **Prices:** Unchanged from last year.

Further details of the programme and of other matters of interest will be given in future bulletins. We plan to finalise a four page flyer and application form by the end of March. If anyone would like to have their name put on the mailing list please contact G3NUG by cluster, mail QTHR or by telephone 0442-62929.

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### MEMBERS' ADVERTISEMENTS

May I remind all members that I am happy to publish advertisements for radio or related items at no charge.

## DX CALENDAR *Tnx DNXS*

NOW	ZS8MI
NOW	Rotuma 3D2AG
Til Mar	T5/N3HQW
Til Mar	9A/K4XU
Til Mar 1	9X by Fs
Til Mar 3	V31RM & V31UO
Til Mar 4	XF0C
Til Mar 5	6Y5/K6JAH
Til Mar 6	ZF2ND by KF6OG
Til Mar 6	3B8 by F5PXQ
Til Mar 12	ZK2 by Ws
Til Mar 12	NA-180 V31BW
Til Mar 12	P4 by VEs
Til Mar 12	V31PP
Til Mar 15	TU2KC
Til Mar 15	A35SQ
Til mid-Mar	ZD8M
Til Mar 16	AH8F by G4ZVJ
Til Mar 17	FR/G0IXC
Til Mar 17	VP2V/W2GUP
Til Mar 31	T9/PA3DZN
Til Apr	FH/F5NCU
Til Apr	S Geo VP8CKB
Til Apr	XT2DK
Til Apr	A92FV on CW
Til Apr 30	4Z85TA
Til Jun	8Q7AA by JG2XYV
Til Jun	5Z4JD by F2JD
Til mid-94	JW5NM
Til Jul	FT5XJ
Til Jul	JW5EBA
Til Aug	9X5AB by DF3ZJ
Til Dec	4L1HX by IK2BHX
Til Feb 95	3D2QB
Til Aug 95	ET3JR by FD1PJQ
Mar	FT5YF starts
Mar 1-?	V5 by DL/V51
Mar 1-2	V5 by ZS/G
Mar 1/8?	SA-040? by HKs
Mar 1-14	TY8OBO
Mar 2-8	T30 by JAs
Mar 4-6	AS-079 JI6KVR/P
Mar 4-17	ZK1(S) by Ws
Mar 5-6	ARRL SSB Contest
Mar 5-10	VP2E by Ws
Mar 5-18	J6 by DLs
Mar 7-10	FR/F5PXQ

Mar 7-25	OC-046/067 by F
Mar 8-18	VP9 by G3PJT
Mar 8-Apr 1?	FO8 by IV3UHL
Mar 9-14	C21/WK3D
Mar 9-16	KH8/W9GW CW
Mar 11-14	NA-085 /IJ4
Mar 12-13	RSGB Commonwealth Contest
Mar 13-16	KC6 by JAs
Mar 14-Apr 6	9J by DLs
Mar 16-18	V6 by JAs
Mar 18-20	KH2 by JAs
Mar 19-20	Bermuda Contest
Mar 19-21	BARTG RTTY Contest
Mar 26-27	CQWW WPX SSB Contest
Mar 27-Apr 5	T33 by SMs
Apr 2-3??	SP DX SSB Contest
Apr 8-10	JA HF CW Contest
Apr 15-17	VISALIA 94
Apr 17	RSGB low pwr 40/80m Ctst
Apr 23	MARCONI DAY
Apr 23-24	Helvetia Contest
Apr 28-30	Dayton 94
May 7-8	ARI DX Contest
Jun 94	TZ6VV QRV again
Jul 30-31	1994 IOTA CONTEST
Oct 7-9	HF/IOTA CONVENTION

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## SHACKLOG 4.00

I shall be showing the latest version of SHACKLOG at the London Amateur Radio and Computer Show at Picket's Lock on March 12th/13th (Oh why is it always the weekend of the Commonwealth Contest?!). I would welcome a chat with any CDXC members there - please come and find me on stand L in the RED Hall (Opposite South Midlands Communications).

Full details of V4.00, including upgrades, may be obtained by sending me a SASE to the usual address. Alan, G3PMR.



## ADVANCE CONTEST INFORMATION - Bruce Gilson, G4WVX

Space does not permit inclusion of the full rules, so an abbreviated version is included together with the source of that information - thanks go mainly to RadCom, QST and CQ magazines. For those who do not have access to these mags, I can supply a copy of the rules as published. Some of the details are the rules from the previous year, as the latest rules have often not been published in the magazines in time for inclusion here.

### **Mar 05/06 ARRL International DX (Phone)** (QST Dec 93)

0000-2400Z RS+Power 160-10m No WARC  
Single-Op all band, QRP  $\leq 5W$ , Low  $\leq 150W$ , High  $>150W$  output  
Single-Op single band; Single-Op assisted all bands  
Multi-Op single Tx, two Tx, unlimited Tx  
W/VE work Non-W/VE, Non-W/VE work W/VE

### **Mar 11/13 JARL International DX (CW)** (QST Nov 93)

2300-2300Z RS+Ser 80-10m No WARC  
Single-op single & multi-band; Multi-op multi-band  
Non-JA work JA, JA work non-JA

### **Mar 12/13 Commonwealth (CW)** (RC Oct 93)

1200-1200Z RST+Ser 80m-10m No WARC  
Single-Op only - no assistance whatsoever  
Single-band or Multi-band + SWL  
All QSOs in lower 30kHz of bands except for QSOs with novices  
above 21.030 & 28.030 MHz  
All UK is one call area, look out for HQ stns (Bonus)  
Commonwealth work Commonwealth (119 call areas)

### **Mar 26/27 CQ WW WPX (Phone)** (QST Feb 93)

0000-2400Z RS+Ser 160-10m No WARC  
Single-Op single & multi-band, High, Low  $<100W$ , QRP  $<5W$  output  
Multi-Op, multi-band, single Tx (10 min rule) and multi-Tx  
Work everyone

### **May 28/29 CQ WW WPX (CW)** (QST Feb 93)

0000-2400Z RST+Ser 160-10m No WARC  
Single-Op single & multi-band, High, Low  $<100W$ , QRP  $<5W$  output  
Multi-Op, multi-band, single Tx (10 min rule) and multi-Tx  
Work everyone

If anyone would like to help with a multi-op entry for any of the bigger contests for CDXC, please let me know. Any suggestions for operating QTHs are always useful. There are likely to be some more operations from Don, G3OZF's QTH, this year.



## CW FROM TRISTAN DA CUNHA *By Roger Western, G3SXW* (Part Two)

### TRISTAN - AT LAST

Twice we heard announcements to change clocks back one hour and a chart was pinned up each morning including predicted arrival time. I woke before 6 a.m. that last morning, in darkness, feeling the ship under way. Like previous nights it had provided only restless sleep, jammed in to the bunk to stop being thrown around by the rolling. I was like a little kid on Christmas morning pulling on clothes to dash outside and find out if the island was visible. Disappointing: weather was foul, light was dim and the island was a huge black mass swirling in the cloud and mist, barely visible.

We dropped anchor at dawn 500 yards off Tristan and waited, not knowing if conditions would permit landing. At that point winds were so bad that even the helicopter was grounded. If it stayed that way throughout the day we'd sail off to Gough, 250 miles away, and try again several days later. Grim faces. Islanders on board with their experience of the sea stared at the swell but eventually said it was easing. The sun came out and clouds started to clear but I soon learned that this was a false sign. The rollers took no notice of what was happening above them. Wonderful though to see Edinburgh settlement in the sunshine all morning, where all the islanders live on the one piece of inhabitable land, alongside the 1960 volcano. We watched the waves crashing into the harbour entrance and waited.

At 11a.m. we saw a small motor-boat coming out of the harbour being tossed around in the swell. It came alongside and

several Tristanians skilfully negotiated the rope ladder on the side of the Agulhas. They were swarthy seamen, beaming ear-to-ear. One family reunion was especially tearful, a daughter who had stayed in England in 1960 hugging her father for the first time in over 30 years.

The helicopter ferried VIPs to the island and went about its work, collecting whale-bones and giving the new Administrator (G4URJ) an inspection tour of the island. Meantime on board everyone suddenly starting moving luggage to the lee of the ship. There were seldom any announcements on board, things just happened. People and luggage then had to be transferred down into the motor-boat. How? I had no idea how this feat was going to be accomplished and felt more than slight trepidation at the thought of going down that rope-ladder with the little boat heaving and bucking below. Can't be, I thought - there are older folk here and women. Then the box appeared. Like a modern-day sedan-chair, room for four people, lifted by the ship's crane and lowered into the small boat, whose crew displayed amazing skill at guiding it safely and (relatively) smoothly to a landing. How they did that was beyond me because the rise and fall at that time was 6 feet or more.

Finally, with all passengers and luggage crammed into this tiny boat we made our way to the harbour, bucking in seas that were far rougher than appeared from up on the decks of a large ship. At the harbour entrance Harold put us into a tight circle whilst awaiting the signal from a chap up on the harbour wall to make an entrance. After a few minutes of this the right wave was spotted and we



made the dash into the harbour. We were followed in by breakers that threw us around somewhat throughout the process of getting on to dry land. We climbed a ten-foot ladder in the harbour wall with the motor-boat jumping around like crazy.

I'd experienced before that feeling of sea-legs when it seems that the ground keeps moving under you. This time there was no such reaction. Very odd. On the quay was a large group of islanders and someone grabbed my arm - I forget who it was - and pointed out Andy and Lorraine. We had no idea what we each looked like, nor even much idea of age. Can you imagine that moment of greeting - one of the most memorable events that will remain etched on my brain for ever.

The sun was shining, the rays were strong, it was about 60F and little wind. It was noon and there was a throng of happy people. I had landed on about the most remote island in the world, in one piece, and was embarking on three weeks of pure joy. The thrill that flooded through the veins was indescribable.

## SETTLING IN

We walked up the hill to the Administrator's office where Lorraine, ZD9CO, works as Island Treasurer. There I was presented with my ZD9SXW licence, a three-page typed document strongly reminiscent of my original G3SXW licence issued in 1963. The fee was 50 pence. Then a walk the full length of the village to my new home for the next three weeks. This took about five minutes, Edinburgh being a closely-packed community of 100 houses or so. We carried my hand-luggage (computer and video), with promises that everything else would be delivered later.

Arriving at the house I found a simple abode, terraced with two other houses occupied by Lorraine's parents and relations, single-storey, asbestos-roofed and plenty of room inside. My own large bedroom, with fruit and flowers thoughtfully provided, was just by the spacious shack, with spare table looking at me invitingly. The welcoming lunch was very special with its Tristan crayfish, a really delicious rock lobster. Then it was party time to welcome home Conrad and Sharon (Lorraine's sister), sitting in the sunshine, drinking beer and meeting the folks. They were mostly quiet, enjoying the occasion, but with a ready wit and an enormous willingness to join in laughter at every opportunity. Throughout the stay I found everyone so warm and welcoming, and it reminded me of a small English country village.

Mid-afternoon on September 29th I set up the TS930 and checked the SWR on Andy's tribander. The cabin luggage had been brought around by the tractor so I now had the station. Equipment in the lock-up on the Agulhas, including the linear and antennas, were to be delivered the next morning. There being no antenna work to do until they were delivered and as Andy and Lorraine went to work I got started, needing no further enticement!

The bands sounded good. Signals were loud from Europe and W/VE on the HF bands - but were they? I quickly realised that the hiss I was hearing at S1 was the receiver noise floor. That's never audible at home and I'd forgotten what it sounds like! Boy, this is a quiet location and those "loud" signals weren't moving the S meter at all. The wonders of AGC. I sent my call-sign once on 21023, the published frequency for that band, and SM5AQB instantly sent his call once and fast. It needed only one diddle-diddle-dit dah-dit



dah-dit from me and the frequency erupted as if they'd all been there waiting. The pile-up was mammoth within seconds and was to remain that way throughout the stay. That first three-hour session on 15 metres netted 450 contacts, running barefoot. Fell exhausted into bed at midnight when the electricity went off and ready to wake early for when it came back on again, a routine that became regular on most nights over the next three weeks.

Twenty was excellent when the mains came on at 0700 and 320 QSOs ensued in that session. During the morning the rest of the luggage came up on the tractor and I was able to get the linear going, but still with just the one antenna. Each day Andy and Lorraine would come in and we'd have lunch together (she's a great cook!) but the rest of the day I was left to my own devices, exactly what a pile-up operator likes. In the evening the Administrator invited all visitors to a reception.

## ANTENNAS

The tribander was fine, although fixed North, to Europe. It was a TH3 on a 40 foot triangular tower and the traps looked beefy enough to make it suitable for QRO. Andy had prepared a ground mounting and 20 foot steel pole for the A3WS. The morning after delivery of the WARC beam I built it and got it ready for Andy to help push up. I wanted to leave it's boom to mast plate loose and pull it around with rope to give directivity but Andy gently suggested that this was not very wise. The weather was still calm, though cloudy now, but he said the island frequently has high winds. Waiting for him to come home from work I found that the SWR was very good, even though the beam was at 45 degrees, the reflector two inches off the ground. At 1600GMT on October 1st I sent my call-sign just once on 24893kHz, ON5TW

called and there ensued 150 contacts in the next hour. It felt very good to make WARC available for the first time from ZD9.

There being no room for the GAP vertical inside Andy's small garden we needed to get permission from the Agricultural Department to install it temporarily just outside his wall on public land. That would take a day or so but I wanted to get on 40 metres that evening after HF died out. A dipole was quickly hung in inverted Vee configuration from the top of the tower, on a convenient halyard. The angles were about right from that height and it resonated first time on the bottom end of 40. That was more progress, antennas now available for six bands. That evening saw 300 contacts go into the log on 40 metres, this time DK2FG being first.

The following morning it was time to build the 30 metre vertical. Again that went up quickly with good SWR right away, ready for the openings after dark. Meantime, a session on 17 metres provided 330 contacts, still with the beam on the ground! Many FOCers had already been worked but it was nice that OH2BDP was the first ever to work ZD9 on 17 metres. The delays in getting all antennas working would of course have been a major problem if this was a one-week expedition, but with three weeks on the island there was time to let things develop.

As it turned out it was not until 8 October that the GAP was up and working. The first day SWR was satisfactory only on 80metres so it had to come down and Andy's muscle was again needed. The replacement capacitor moved resonance from 1880 to 1810kHz, with acceptable SWR at 1830 but for some reason 7210kHz was the best SWR on 40 metres. It had been fine when we built it in G3WVG's garden and after double-



checking all dimensions this remained a mystery. Not to worry though because that simple Vee was performing very well indeed on 40. Finally, then the full nine bands were available.

After using the GAP for a week, with very good performance on 80 but much less impressive top-band results, along came the storm on the night of 13/14th October. It had been windy most of the time after that first day or two but speeds picked up to 30-40mph and with stronger gusts, the wind howling down the sheer 2,000 foot cliff straight onto the antennas. Now I understood Andy's reluctance to leave the A3WS unbolted. In the grey of pre-dawn the disaster became apparent. The middle section of the vertical had simply buckled out mid-way between the guys, which had themselves withstood the test. There was nothing for it but to take the thing apart. The bent tuning rods could have been partially straightened but a main mast section had nearly sheared through and cracked the GAP section itself, breaking joining wires in the process.

By that time there were a good number of 160/80 metre contacts in the log and it seemed less than total disaster. Towards the end I tried extending the 40 metre Vee into an 80 metre dipole but of course from only 40 feet it performed more as a low dipole than a Vee. It acquired some more JAs but no useful openings were found to Europe/USA.

## PROPAGATION

Arriving in a different part of the world provides the fascination of relearning propagation. Which bands will open to where and when? It takes a few days to learn and its challenging to watch for openings, file away all the information in your head and start to work out what to do

next to meet your operating priorities. Where possible WARC would be favoured over 14/21MHz, where ZD9 had been most aired in the past. JA and West Coast W/VE would be the major population areas with the shortest openings so should not be missed.

Of course research before leaving home helps a lot, but somehow can't prevent the disorientation when you first get QRV. On this occasion it was less dramatically different from what I'm used to at home because its the same at least in one dimension, that of longitude.

After a few days there's the danger of assuming that things will happen the same as you've heard before. Often propagation is changing so assumptions need always to be checked. The West Coast won't necessarily show up at the same time as yesterday if the flux is dropping, then again don't write off a band at a particular hour just because it didn't work the first time. Its easy to get locked in to a pattern of band changing so the trick is to keep very flexible. Also, you may well have missed a useful opening in the first few days when busy operating on a different band. It was a question of finding paths to each area on each band so as to please as many people on as many bands as possible. One pushy W0 complained half-way through the trip that I hadn't worked the mid-West on 17 metres enough! Thanks feller, I am trying.

Within that flexibility there are priorities for bands and areas of the world and these often conflict. The worst one on this trip was around 2100 GMT when Japan could be worked on 80/40/30 metres, yet Europe was also available on those bands and on 20, as well as western N. America on HF. Its not always as simple as working into the areas with the shortest openings because



that sometimes coincides with another short opening elsewhere, on another band.

The priority areas for picking up the short openings were JA and West Coast W/VE. As it turned out the JA path was quite predictable, both at their sunrise and also long-path just after my sunrise. However this was always on LF, with strong signals, the HF bands having very restricted openings except a little on 17 metres LP and 15 metres short-path. The W6/7s could be easily worked on 40/30 metres around 0700 but needed good conditions for the higher bands to open late afternoons. In the early evenings they had to share some of those other priorities.

South America and Europe hardly need mention because conditions were available on all bands for long periods. That North/South path to Europe was really excellent. When listening to such large numbers of stations calling you easily discern the shifting peaks of path. Mornings it would start to the East in UA and UB, moving to Scandinavia and then across to Western Europe. A lot of the time all areas are audible but the source of the strongest signals shifts. From my perspective therefore it seemed that I could work Europeans all day but if you were calling with a weak signal then there would have been a peak when chances of getting through were best.

Unfortunately the path to VK/ZL was blocked by the mountain. No ZLs were worked at all and only four contacts into VK, all on long-path around 0700. There was nothing I could do about that except listening specially hard for them in the pile-ups and giving some "VK/ZL only" calls whenever hearing one of them.

Thirty metres is always a difficult band to read. It performed best around sunrise and

in the evening hours. It seems to be neither HF nor LF. Forty was much more predictable. It provided good openings and deserved much more time spending on it, but 160/80 also demanded attention.

As always 80 and 160 were the least predictable. The first evening on 80 provided excellent signals from Europe as well as JA, but the path to Europe was unreliable on later days. Top-band is a story unto its own, a band requiring enormous amounts of patience. Signals slowly lift above the noise for a few moments then drop away again. What was fascinating was that seldom was more than one signal heard at a time and I got the impression that the path was slowly moving, with a highly specific end point. UK had the best of it, even more than continental Europe. Only 21 W/VE QSOs were made on 160 but frustratingly many more were heard calling who were not copying me.

At first I was most unhappy to be let down on the generator. However, as it turned out it was much less of a loss than was feared. On nights when the islanders have been fishing the mains electricity is left on for the freezing plant. This happened four nights of my stay. During those nights there were good openings on 40 metres but 160 and 80 provided few QSOs between 0200 and 0600. Their best times were in the evenings.

Turning again to HF propagation there is no doubt that the local terrain had a major impact. The sea is 200 metres from the house, with a clear take-off West-North-East. Immediately behind the QTH is a sheer 2,000 foot cliff and this had the effect, I'm sure, of splaying the signals out like a reflector to the North. With a QSK amplifier it was impossible to read my own side-tone through the massive echo, if listening to my own frequency. HF signals



from JA were theoretically coming from 90 degrees off the fixed beam heading yet were loud when the bands were open.

As the trip went on flux numbers dropped but that equinox lift had done its job for me. Throughout the summer WWV had given a flux of well below 100. It peaked at well over 100 just as I was starting up and

dropped gradually, but only into the nineties. A disturbance on 9 October had little impact.

## THE PILE-UPS

The average hourly QSO rates tell a story of their own:

Band:	160	80	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	Total
QSOs:	82	750	2761	2534	3194	3069	3256	3184	4403	23233
QSOs/hour:	11	89	98	105	136	121	135	118	142	114

Overall, the higher the frequency the higher the QSO rates, perhaps because signal to noise ratio is progressively higher as you approach 10 metres, permitting calls to be picked out more easily. Demand on 18 and 24 MHz eased off a little towards the end, reducing rates somewhat.

Size of pile-up is determined by many factors, such as rarity, signal strength, operating styles etc. QSO rates are determined then by size of pile-up (not too big), operating abilities at both ends and most importantly signal strength differentiation. Strength itself is not the issue but differentiation between callers: if all are at the same strength then call-signs are difficult to pick out. The biggest factor in picking up call-signs, and therefore in QSO rates, is signal selectivity. Vast numbers of signals within a few hertz of each other can blur into one roaring cacophony, even if they are not over-loud. The result can be a mush. I found this effect most pronounced on 14MHz and was constantly experimenting with receiver settings to re acquire selectivity: switching AGC off, varying levels of RF attenuation, and RF/AF gain, as well as every combination of filtering available, including turning them off. Once, on 20 metres towards the end of the trip, the pile-up beat me for this reason: it was all mush. This

didn't occur on other frequencies so either the 930 is reacting differently on that band or more likely solar noise was having its effect.

The problem of the pile-ups being too big needs some thinking about. I thought the H44SX pile-ups were the biggest they can ever get but on this trip I experienced a whole new level! Some expeditioners have been heard to suggest that size can be controlled by reducing power. Those that can not then hear you will stop calling. The advantage is increased QSO rate because calls can be picked up more quickly. In fact the fastest rates are often available when only a few are calling, as long as they are there all the time. If the problem of differentiating calls in the noise is insurmountable then perhaps that's a solution worth trying but in my book its to be avoided if at all possible, simply because it prevents the guys with smaller antennas from having a chance of getting in the log. A better alternative is to spread the pile out wider. This can be done simply by going back to stations on the upper edge all the time. Astute callers latch on quickly and call higher, but many don't. Keep doing this for some minutes and hey presto the pile is spread as wide as you want it. Occasionally this provides a split pile, those who listen for your receive frequency and move



progressively up the band and those who stay put at 1-2kHz up. This can help because there are then two top edges of the pile to pick calls from, not one, with something of a gap in the middle. Several times I noted that Europeans stayed close and Americans called higher and the two groups almost separated themselves into two geographic pile-ups!

Another way to reduce pile-up size to manageable proportions is to call by areas. This was by far my favoured solution to which I had to resort on many occasions, particularly on 40 and 80 metres. But in order to minimise frustration on the part of those waiting I kept the areas very broad (i.e. Eu, JA, W/VE) and changed every few minutes. The occasional caller who gets impatient after waiting a few seconds can be ignored and as with most other aspects of pile-up behaviour the vast majority co-operate very well indeed.

As with everything in life there's an ideal balance somewhere: you want the maximum possible QSO rate to get as many as possible into the log. You also want the smaller station to have a chance to get through but you don't want to pollute the whole band with QRM from your pile-up. I found on occasions there was no choice but to spread the pile beyond the 2-3kHz that has always previously been found to be adequate, to as much as 5kHz. I didn't like to do that but it kept the rate and the rhythm going.

There was a very strange experience once, just towards the end of the trip. At one point for several minutes the pile wouldn't spread! It was very deep, but spread over only about three kHz, on 20 metres. No-one would call off the top edge, the pile stopping like a cliff-edge so I couldn't pick out calls. Anyone choosing to call even 50Hz higher at that point would have got

through first call because I was desperate to hear a call-sign separated even by just a fraction! Every pile-up operator has his personal style, but a general suggestion for cracking pile-ups might be to call just a fraction above the pile, especially when you hear a long pause while the DX station is hunting around for a signal to copy.

Control of pile-ups can be dramatically improved by giving call-sign frequently, repeating back corrected call-signs, sending an information message often (QSL route, QTH) and especially by being rhythmic. The rhythm can be maintained by transmitting at predictable intervals and sending regular content. I tried to finish every over with either "5NN" or "UP", helping to clarify whether I was now expecting to hear only the one station being worked, or to hear everyone call in. It may be that a significant proportion of callers are having problems copying, either because of QRM or because of CW speed. If they hear the same thing many times over, in an ordered sequence, there's a better chance of following what's going on. Also, a balance is needed on CW speed. After all, this was a CW-only trip and maybe there were many non-CW operators trying to make a contact. In the earlier part of the trip I transmitted at the highest CW speed I could sensibly manage commensurate with maximising QSO rate, to 40 wpm or more. Later it settled at somewhat slower speeds, maybe around 32wpm, as being the best for minimising chaos, and therefore for maximising QSO rate as a consequence. Similarly, I often gave my own call-sign only every 3rd/4th QSO at the beginning but found that control was exerted better if it was given EVERY contact, due to the benefit of regularity. My own call-sign was only sent when I wanted to find a new caller, so everyone knew they were welcome to call at that moment.



As always there were a few who broke all the rules but their visibility (audibility) is high - the vast majority of callers are highly efficient, calling at the right times, on the right frequencies and being brief. Chaos on my own frequency seemed to be worst on 40 metres. I'm not sure why that should be but have noticed the same from home on other expeditions. As we all know the worst offenders are mostly from Europe, particularly the South and East, but the continuous calling tactic is now very common. Pushing and shoving behaviour explains much of it but could it be that some think that is how to tail-end? If I worked an efficient tail-ender it was taken by the many others as a clear sign that they should call non-stop (even after hearing "QRZ G3?" five times). Regrettably I stopped working tail-enders for this reason. Sometimes I logged them right away and pretended to hear their next call. Conversely, the problem of calling with only the suffix is becoming much less, in CW pile-ups at least. It was so infrequent that I could simply tune to another receive frequency. Whenever identifying the full call of such a caller it was invariably from Italy.

This was the first trip when pirate activity became a problem, perhaps indicating greater rarity. It was so frustrating to hear Europeans working "me" on top band that first evening, leaving me to call and call, unheard. It was also irritating occasionally to hear someone take over the pile-up when I went QRX and continue to make QSOs for me. The biggest volume of pirate QSOs seems to have been into W6/7 on 15 metres around 22-23GMT with signals emanating from JA or UA0.

The amount of operating varied according to other activities such as antenna work, socialising and so forth. The biggest day was 1,988 QSOs on 4 October with 14 hours QRV, the smallest was 396 contacts on October 20th, when preparing to leave. The trip average was just about 1,000 QSOs daily, and that conforms with previous expeditions. The difference this time, which permitted 23,000 QSOs, was the longer stay. With three weeks as opposed to only one week on previous trips the pressures were somewhat less.

## LIFE ON TRISTAN

This is a truly isolated, hardy, self-sufficient, rustic community. Their life is crime and stress-free. It was a real pleasure to get away from the ills of the modern world for a while. Once I decided to tune in the BBC World News, only to switch off half-way through because it was too depressing.

The island has fascinating origins and is worth reading up. The 20/9/93 edition of QRZ-DX carries a full description. There are only eight family names, the first seven deriving from individual shipwrecked sailors. Whilst their origins were from different countries the culture is now entirely British. Many Tristanians look non-British, a result of blood-lines from St. Helena Island and Italy in particular. My host Andy, ZD9BV, has the surname Repetto so I had to be careful not to criticise the worst source of bad pile-up behaviour!

Space in the village, as well as for animal grazing, is precious because almost all the island consists of uninhabitable sheer cliffs. The island is actually a steep mountain rising from the sea to 7,000

feet. Each family tends its own sheep, chickens, cows and potato patches. This is the staple diet, a delicious variety of potato that is used creatively. The men go fishing and work on the harbour extension project, or on local amenities such as electricity supply and so forth. One such friendly chap was seen one morning at the top of the electricity supply pole in the neighbour's garden. On enquiring I was told that he was fixing a loose wire. Good luck, says I, wondering if flickering lights from my linear were the cause!

I found everyone so friendly and welcoming, with ready laughter. There's no television, only video recorders, and they seem to pay little attention to the outside world so don't listen to short-wave radio. In my circle, whilst on the island, there was a lot of country music, which suited me very well, and a lot of social activity. Friends drop in for a chat and a drink and every birthday is an excuse for a get-together. There is the one pub, open 6-9pm which is very popular with its snooker table and darts, and a Cafe which serves drinks on Sunday lunch times. If I now mention the Supermarket, the church, the Gift Shop, Post Office, Museum and cemetery - that's it!

Personally, I was just fascinated by the Tristan language. It wasn't apparent on the first day because everyone spoke to me in normal English. The accent was mixed-up West Country, cockney, Geordie, with elongated vowel sounds. Being originally from the South-West of England I found myself slipping quickly back into my native accent. Between themselves however I began to hear a language that I couldn't understand at all!

Only when listening carefully could it be discerned as originating in English. Vocabulary was English but it was spoken very rapidly with much truncation, words and syllables being left out altogether. By the end of the trip I had tuned in but it was the source of an enormous amount of good-natured leg-pulling.

The economy is dependant on crayfish and postage stamps. It seems rather vulnerable to me and I hope some diversification can be developed. They are financially independent of the British government but take some aid in the form of consultancy. They also have links with South Africa, of course, being their nearest point for flow of goods and people. Education is good, with some 30 children in school, but only up to age 15. Further education is found in England and, I'm told, this is one way in which the population size is self-limiting because some youngsters choose to remain. The island cannot sustain more than the present 300. Health is good but with a very high incidence of asthma. The affects of in-breeding appear to be minimal.

The biggest single factor influencing life on the island on the island is the weather, and in particular the wind. It blows almost non-stop, bringing colder air on occasion depending on direction. Houses have no heating and for Tristanians clearly its never that cold. Temperatures in October were around 50-60F. But the wind and direction of sea-swell determine whether it can be a fishing day. When deemed suitable for fishing the gong is sounded at 5.15am and 4-5 boats spend the day on the crayfish grounds. That gong woke me too but its message was



different: You can operate tonight, Roger!

## DEPARTURE

The Agulhas was due back on October 21st for embarkation and departure the following day. We listened to its progress by eaves-dropping their skeds on 4MHz with Tristan Radio. After anchoring and arrival of the helicopter there was enormous confusion and high-speed bush-telegraphed rumours that the weather would demand fast departure that afternoon. The islanders reckoned the winds would deteriorate the next day, the ship's Captain indicating that his NavSat promised improvement. Everyone on the ship naturally wanted to get on their way, those on the island preferring to embark the next day, in particular the asthma researchers who were still collecting blood samples from the islanders. I operated that day expecting at any minute to have to pack up rapidly and board.

As it turned out we boarded the following morning and indeed the seas were calmer. But the night before there was one almighty farewell party, hosted by the Canadian asthma team, that left me packing up during the night by candle-light! Must remember to scrape the wax and wine stains off the linear casing. Final QSO was at 2359GMT on October 21st, with VO1NA.

We boarded with the same motor-boat and the box lifted by the ship's crane. Nobody checked any passenger lists or anything but no-one got left behind. Luggage and mail were already on-board and farewells were made. Again the remoteness of the place struck me at that moment. In this modern world of

airplanes there's always the chance of revisiting anywhere at some future time, but here? That sense of possible finality is rare. I will always harbour the thought of returning to Tristan and keep alive the wish that an opportunity will arise.

## RETURN JOURNEY

This will be brief because return journeys are somewhat less newsworthy. The voyage was a lot calmer with the stabilisers functioning properly but seas were rough for much of the way and turn-out for meals was low. I developed tooth-ache which was no fun and had to simply suffer until reaching Cape Town.

The returning crew from Gough Island included Alan, ZD9CQ, which provided a kindred spirit, as well as guys who had spent time on Marion Island. I learned a lot about another super-rare DXCC country. As it turned out I operated /MM only one afternoon. We weren't shut down but there was some comment about the ship's WEFAX suffering interference so I wasn't about to risk anything.

Much time was spent analysing logs, preparing a FAX report to DXNS, playing bridge and chess for the first time in many years, and would you believe teaching CW to three young South Africans who were keen to learn. Time, in this case six days and nights, can always be used to advantage, but on-board ship it seems so much more pleasurable because there's no pressure.

The final night, October 27th, we were due to wait outside Cape Town as immigration officials were unavailable till morning. Again confusion reigned and it turned out that a crew member's sudden

appendicitis (diagnosed by the ship's doctor) meant that we docked late evening. Everyone was thrilled and clamoured for a passport stamp. We walked on dry land again but in fact slept the night on board after visiting the WaterFront for a few drinks!.

Back to the hotel, arranged for the damaged GAP to be sea freighted to UK, developed photos, dry-cleaning, phoned home. Those two days in Cape Town were valuable time for reordering of my life back in the real world. Al, ZS1AAX, kindly transported me to the airport, for another 12 hours packed like sardines in a 747. The security crew at Cape Town airport will never forget my hand-luggage. He burst out laughing and called each of his colleagues in turn to try and lift it! Arrived home at 7a.m. on Sunday 31st October and back to work the next day, after exactly six weeks away.

### QSLing

On arriving home there were 1,491 envelopes on the door-mat! Well, actually my son had piled them on the dining table so I could get through the door but my postman was evidently in shock. Since then the flow has remained at about 100 per day only easing towards the end of November, at a total of around 3,000. Many envelopes contain multiple QSOs so it could account for 6-7,000 contacts. Cards are being printed as I write and direct replies will begin to go out before Christmas.

Such a trip is enormously enjoyable but the comments with QSLs add a whole chunk of extra pleasure. Many included long letters and I am simply thrilled that so many could make contact with a new one. Comments about last one needed for

CW DXCC, 300th country on 40 metres and so forth were plentiful and do make me very happy.

Thank you also to the many who said kind words about the operation, and forgive me if there is some delay in replying.

### THANKS

Andy and Lorraine made this whole trip possible. They not only opened their home to a complete stranger but made the stay immensely enjoyable in all dimensions. They couldn't have done more to make me feel at home. Thank you both for creating a life-long friendship. Also to all the other islanders who I met, who likewise welcomed me so warmly, put up with flickering lights and thumping noises on their cassette players, and tolerated my dreadful dart playing! Thank you to the Island Council, Administrator and Post Master for co-operation with the permissions and to Tristan Investments for efficient arrangements to transport me and all the equipment. A word also to Cushcraft for a discounted A3WS that worked like a dream. I'm also very grateful indeed to the 99% of operators who called in the pile-ups in such an efficient manner as to make the operation a success. Finally to my pals G3TXF and G3WVG for practical help and much encouragement and advice but the next trip we do together, you hear?!

"Where are you going next?" they all ask. That book was most appropriately named because the question is the most common after getting home. Answer: I haven't a clue where or when, but the DXpedition bug has bitten too deep to stay at home throughout the coming year.



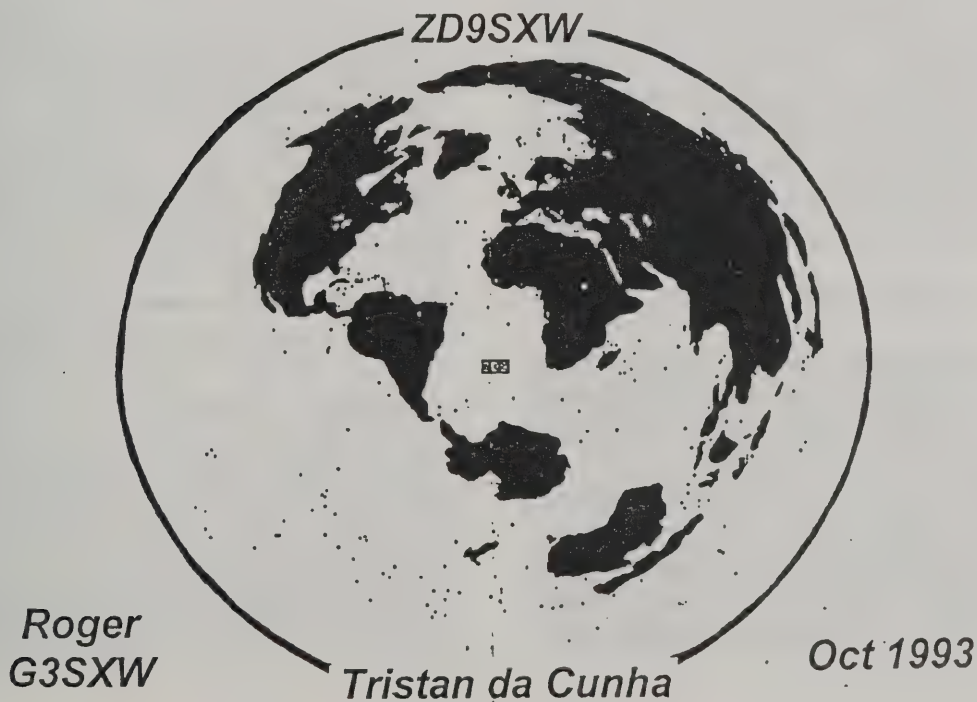
## First Station Worked

Band	Any	Europe	UK	Americas	Japan
160	PY1BVY	GW3YDX	GW3YDX	PY1BVY	None
80	PY1BVY	LZ1GC	G3COJ	PY1BVY	JA8CDT
40	DK2FG	DK2FG	G3TXF	W3UM	JR1FYS
30	JA3EGE	DL3SDP	G3RTE	K9AJ	JA3EGE
20	W8HFX	F2NB	G2HPF	W8HFX	JA8CEA
17	OH2BDP	OH2BDP	G4BWP	W4AI	JA2MGE
15	SM5AQB	SM5AQB	GW3CBA	W1MLG	JR1BVU
12	ON5TW	ON5TW	G3RTE	W4AI	JA7HMZ
10	F6AQF	F6AQF	G3TBK	K9CW	None

## QSOs By Continent

	160	80	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	ALL	%
Europe	55	194	788	1118	1883	2164	2511	2178	3021	13912	59.9
North America	23	218	1323	593	631	592	571	986	1313	6250	26.9
Asia	0	217	534	803	606	260	123	35	31	2609	11.2
South America	4	47	89	12	43	28	35	27	47	332	1.4
Africa	1	11	20	13	13	14	19	8	11	110	0.5
Oceania	0	0	5	4	6	1	0	1	0	17	0.1
TOTAL	83	687	2759	2543	3182	3059	3259	3235	4423	23230	100.0

## BEAM'S EYE VIEW OF THE WORLD FROM ZD9



# The 1993 Mellish Reef DXpedition

## *John Linford, G3WGV*

Back in March 1993 I got a rather strange message on the PacketCluster from Don, G3OZF. Would I like to go to Mellish Reef on a major international DXpedition? Seemed they were a bit short of CW operators and they thought I might do as one. Clearly this was the work of one P29DX! A quick check of my log showed that I had not, in fact, ever worked Mellish, and no, I didn't know where it was, so the next port of call was my atlas.

### **So where is Mellish then?**

Failure! Mellish Reef doesn't appear in any of my atlases. Not even a mention. Not so much as a tiny dot somewhere in the middle of the Pacific. I was later to discover that the **only** atlas that actually does show Mellish is the ginormous Times Atlas, so I have ordered one so I can actually show people where I went! Meanwhile, Don OZF was able to tell me that Mellish is about 400 miles NE of Brisbane, well up in the Mega Rare category for the Deserving and therefore (he said) the ideal place to go for my summer holidays.

### **Decisions decisions!**

Well, of course I wanted to go! Although I had never been on a major DXpedition before, I felt that with some 27 years of Amateur Radio behind me I ought to be able to manage, and anyway there was that feeling that it would be nice to put something back into the hobby having benefited from so many other DXpeditions in the past. And quite apart

from that, it sounded like it would be fun!

Before I could go though, there were a couple of minor difficulties to address. The most major of these was that I had just joined Racal and due to a curious quirk in the way they allocate holiday, I was only allowed 10 days between starting and 1 December. I needed 20! So what I did was to write a letter to the MD telling him I had been invited to represent Europe on a major expedition. I then generally extolled the benefits to Racal of them letting me go (as far as I remember, there weren't really any). Anyway, it worked, and I got my 20 days holiday (not free, mark you: I borrowed ten of them from 1994, so no gallivanting off again this year!).

I must confess that I had really thought I would be unable to get the holiday, so when that particular hurdle was cleared the decision was in effect made. I was definitely going!

### **What would we do without Fax machines?**

During the next few months there was a veritable flurry of fax exchanges between Steve, P29DX, Bill, VK4CRR (expedition organiser), and myself. During the course of this I determined that it was entirely appropriate for Mellish Reef to be absent from atlases, being only 100m by 400m in area, and rather less than 2m above sea level at high tide. Furthermore, I ascertained that the proposed way, indeed the only way,



of getting there was via a 63 foot long sailing boat. This did not seem like good news to this particular land lubber - I have always thought it was a long way between Dover and Calais, and what's more, I'm fairly sure those ferries are longer than 63' (actually, they are probably *higher* than that!).

Gradually the team firmed up and it became apparent that I would, indeed, be the only Amateur on the expedition from Europe (well, Steve, P29DX would be there, and he is almost more English than I am, but since when was P29 in Europe?). The full team would comprise:

VK4CRR	Bill	Expedition organiser
VK2BEX	Atsu	A Japanese op, living in VK
VK2BJL	Harry	An ex Brit., who'd been to Mellish 3 times before!
P29DX	Steve	Complete with his CDXC key, which he <b>didn't use!</b>
V73C	Ken	An American living in the Marshall Islands
K5VT	Vince	The DXpedition's very own quack
WA4DAN	Murray	100% SSB
G3WGV	Me	100% CW

The team would therefore have a pretty good split between modes, with K5VT and myself on CW, P29DX and WA4DAN on SSB, and the rest being likely to operate either mode. RTTY wasn't forgotten either, with VK2BEX and K5VT doing most of the work on that mode.

Well, we had long discussions by fax about operating schedules, whether to use computers or paper for logging, what frequencies we should use and when, and all the usual things that preoccupy DXpeditioners before they actually get to their destination and find that a lot of the decisions are invalidated by circumstances.

## Frequencies

Yes, we had a lot of discussion, nay argument, about frequencies. Bill had proposed some frequencies that we in Europe would have serious difficulties with, and others that quite clearly contravened the band planning

conventions. Maybe the most contentious was the plan to transmit SSB on 7123KHz. Try as I might, I could not convince Bill that it's a tad noisy up there, and that we wouldn't be heard. Another one was to use 28445 for both SSB *and* CW. The rationale for this was that the lower end of 28MHz is full of illegal CB originating in SE Asia.

In the end, we agreed that we'd try the proposed frequencies out and adjust them if necessary, which is exactly what we did. Actually, I don't think we ever did go on 28445 CW...

## How to log?

This was another area of debate before the expedition. Basically, P29DX, K5VT, V73C and myself were all for logging to computer (well, how else would you log?) while VK4CRR was dead against it on the basis that it was another thing to go wrong, and that some of the operators would not have the requisite keyboard skills. Again we agreed to differ, and as a

result half the expedition members logged to computer, using TurboLog, and half to paper.

### Ready to go!

At last I had my visa (a curious requirement for visiting a Commonwealth country, but I gather we require VK visitors to get a visa before they come here, and diplomatic tit for tat is the order of the day). Next it was down to the Travel Agent and a whopping bill for £970 to get to Brisbane and back. I opted to fly Qantas, on the basis that they had the most direct routes, via Singapore, with very short stopovers. I could have done it for £750, but it would have taken three days(!) to get there.

So it was that on a mild 9th September, I presented myself at Heathrow Terminal 3 at 8pm ready for the off. In my rucksack I had sleeping bag, plenty of T shirts and pairs of shorts, wet weather clothing, cold weather clothing and general miscellanea for survival in conditions that I really could not imagine until we got there. My airline bag was packed to the gunwales with computer, key and keyer, keying leads, headphones and other stuff guaranteed to give the airport X-ray machine apoplexy. Needless to say this is precisely what happened, and I spent an interesting 30 minutes explaining to various people just what I was doing with all this stuff. It went something like this...

What's in this bag sir?

A computer.. and a Morse key sir? What ever are you going to do with them?

You're going to a desert island sir?

It's not inhabited by anyone sir?

Oh. It *is* inhabited, by thousands of birds and crabs.

You're going to try and contact 50,000 people all over the world sir?

What's wrong with using the telephone like everyone else sir?

And so on. I left him shaking his head slowly and headed for passport control. En route, I took out the computer and made sure that the dreaded X-ray machine hadn't killed it. It hadn't, and I have to say that in all my years of travelling I have never had any item of electronic equipment damaged by putting it through one of these machines.

The flight was like all the rest: uneventful. I am reminded of the story of Prince Philip, who, when asked how his flight was, asked whether the enquirer had ever flown before. He replied that indeed he had. "Well" said the Prince, "it was just like that". But see later for more information on this topic.

### Brisbane

28 hours later, I stepped out onto the tarmac at Brisbane airport. Yes, you actually do get to step on the tarmac. And you get to walk to the terminal building too. Rather quaint really.

I was met at Brisbane by Bill, VK4CRR, who then proceeded to give me a guided tour of the Sunshine beach on the way north to Gympie where he lives. There were rather a lot of young ladies on the beaches, in various states of undress which had the effect of banishing what tiredness I might have had, but about which no more will be said.



Once at Bill's, the work began. Bill had hired a 3 ton truck and it was already half loaded with equipment. Tents, generators, masts towers and rotators, antennas of all descriptions, long pegs and vast amounts of rope were all on board, but the stations were safely stowed in Bill's house. We loaded them up, five FT990s and 3 linears, then headed off on our travels up north again towards Bundaberg where our yacht would be waiting.

## Bundaberg

Along the way we collected yet more equipment: tables, chairs, camp beds and so on, until the truck really was completely full. Eventually though, we got to Bundaberg, some 250 miles north of Brisbane and found the yacht, stuck in the mud of low tide some 50 feet from the jetty. With a couple of hours to wait whilst the tide came in, we unloaded the truck and did a quick check that we had everything we needed.

Next came a trip into Bundaberg itself to buy provisions and other last minute items. Bundaberg is quite a bustling town, although there is really only one street to the main shopping area. All the more surprising, then to discover that there were no less than six liquor stores in the town! In one of these, I discovered some local wine that rejoiced in the name of SSB! This wholly unsatisfactory situation was fortunately put to rights by the discovery of a bottle of CW, so I got one of each, just in case our operating skills were in need of some sort of top-up. Other delights that we availed ourselves of included Bundy Rum which was ludicrously cheap and by all accounts very good.

Somewhere along the line, we found a need at the yacht for 240V, so we decided to run up one of the generators. And just as well we did, for the first one we tried burst into life enthusiastically enough, but absolutely refused to produce any volts! After a lot of fiddling it was decided that the beast was beyond our ability to repair at the quayside, so off we trundled again into downtown Bundaberg to find help. Needless to say, the bit that was broken, the regulator as I recall, was nowhere to be had in the principality of Bundaberg, so we had to hire another generator. We also made a point of checking the other generators, three in total. Fortunately they all worked ok.

## The Nina Q1

Nina Q1 is a 63 foot long aluminium hulled racing yacht. It is an ocean going craft, fully equipped with GPS, auto pilot and turbo-diesel engine and weighs in at 23 tons before loading up with a DXpedition's worth of equipment. We hired the yacht, complete with crew of two for the duration of the DXpedition and it was to prove just adequate for the task. Our crew members were Gerry, the skipper, and assistant skipper Rick, whose command of the vernacular was impressive to say the least.

The first thing on board was four drums of unleaded petrol for the generators. Each of these drums held 200 litres and took four people to lift. We had to use a block and tackle to load them aboard Nina Q1. During the following day we loaded almost 3 tons of equipment onto the yacht, causing it to sink visibly further into the water, and, in the words of the skipper, so steer like a brick!

## **The team assembles**

During the day and well into the evening, various team members started arriving from the four corners of the world. V73C and K5VT got there early enough to be able to enjoy a couple of Aussie beers. At this juncture, I have to say something about Aussie beer! It is dreadful! Even the Americans think that Aussie beer is dreadful, and that, in my opinion, says all there is to say about it.

By midnight, we were all assembled and were just able to gather around the small table inside Nina Q1's cabin. For the first time since I had arrived in VK, it was raining hard, but it was still quite warm enough for shorts even so. Surrounding us, in every nook and cranny was our expedition equipment. I think it is true to say that we couldn't have got any more equipment or people on board.

## **A life on the ocean waves**

At 2am, high tide at Bundaberg, we slowly and quietly made our way out of the tiny harbour. Vince, K5VT, who is a medical doctor, had raided his drug store and gave us all some little patches to stick behind our ears which were supposed to prevent sea sickness. As it turned out, we didn't need them on the trip out, for the sea was like a mill pond.

After 24 hours, we were clearing the Great Barrier Reef, and were able to turn on a more northerly heading towards Mellish. Now that we were in deep water, we started to see dolphin and whales from time to time. It is an incredible and noisy experience to see a whale jump clean out of the water less than 100m away from the boat. Dolphins are smaller and more agile, and amused

us for long periods by swimming alongside the bows and jumping together like a team of acrobats.

It is a remarkable fact that when you are in a yacht and only about 5 feet above the waves, the horizon is only about 5 miles away. This means that other ships can be upon you within minutes of first appearing over the horizon. With this in mind, we arranged a watch keeping schedule between us all, so that there was always one of the crew plus two of us up at any time. This was particularly difficult at night, when the gentle swaying of the boat, and balmy air was rather more conducive to sleep than scanning the horizon for boats. In the entire voyage to Mellish I think we only ever spotted one other craft, and that passed several miles to port side.

For almost 4 days we motored day and night towards Mellish Reef. On a couple of occasions we had enough wind to use the sails, but there was never quite enough to enable us to keep a reasonable speed under sail, so most of the time the engine was running as well. During the trip we sorted out the various computers we had brought between us, and got the logging software configured ready for the off.

Another topic that taxed our minds was that of operator scheduling. Steve, P29DX had prepared a schedule that provided for four or five operators 24 hours per day for the planned 10 days of operation. Scheduling is always a difficult issue, as much as anything else because propagation dictates the use or otherwise of specific frequencies at a given time. We decided to give the schedule a try,



but not be afraid to drop it if it appeared necessary.

## Land Ahoy!

Suddenly, the echo sounder that had been showing infinity metres to the bottom (in reality, greater than 300m, that being the maximum range of the instrument) let out a bleep and showed sea floor again. The reef was approaching, but as yet there was nothing to see. It was fully another hour before Rick, perched half way up one of the masts yelled "land ahoy!" and we knew that our journey was almost finished. Another hour and we were inside the coral reef and could plainly see the little sand cay in the middle of the reef that was to be our home for the DXpedition. It didn't look very big!

The next challenge was to get the yacht as close as we could to the island. Inside the reef, the water is very shallow and there are many coral heads to navigate around: any collision with them would be bad news indeed. There is supposed to be a boat channel where the water is somewhat deeper, leading up to the south side of the island, but it soon became clear that this was no better than any other route, and anyway, the best location for the stations turned out to be at the north end. So we anchored the yacht about 1km away from the island in about 3-4m of water and set about getting ourselves ashore.

## Zodiacs

You've all heard of Zodiacs. They are the rubber dinghies that have been used by many a DXpedition to ferry equipment and operators to their quarry, and so it was with us. We had two of them, plus

an aluminium boat affectionately known as the "tinny".

During the first few trips, we took enough equipment ashore to be able to put up shelters and, then to get the first stations on the air. It's really quite surprising how much kit you can get into a Zodiac, and with the weather being so idyllic we were able to use all three boats at once. The first time we used the tinny though it almost sank! Ummm... forgot to put the drain plug in said Rick. Just as well we had stuff in there that didn't mind getting wet.

## Mellish Reef, coral and birds

The first party to land on Mellish included Vince K5VT, and landed in the middle of the west facing beach. Within minutes they were standing on the highest point, all of two metres higher, and surveying one of the rarest DX locations in the world.

The island is nothing more than a sand cay, made up of broken coral. Most of the coral is like very coarse sand, but there is quite a lot of larger pieces scattered around. As far as we could tell, this broken coral went down for ever. Certainly during the course of our stay we had occasion to dig some deep pits and we never got to the bottom of it.

The stuff gets everywhere. It's very uncomfortable to walk on and if you get a coral cut then it is likely to go septic, so we had to wear footwear pretty well all the time. Unfortunately, the coral then gets into your shoes. This together with the fact that we were continually in and out of the water, dragging zodiacs up the beach and generally moving stuff around meant that we were fighting a never

ending battle with coral from the day we arrived until the day we left. Indeed, I was still pulling bits of coral out of my trainers and clothing when I got back to the UK!

We decided that the best location for the stations would be at the northern end of the island. At that end the coral is relatively smooth and there is little vegetation. Going further to the south the land gets slightly higher and becomes more fully covered with the low shrub vegetation that is the only thing that seems to grow on the island. We think the shrubs grow better at the southern end because being higher, that part of the island is less likely to be under water during the major storms that sometimes batter the area.

Because of the vegetation, the very large bird population tends to nest at the southern end and with the tropical climate there is no specific season for the birds to rear their young, with the result that there are many unhatched eggs, tiny chicks and half grown birds all over the place. Obviously a place to avoid.

### **Building the stations**

The first thing to go up, once we had established our site was a shelter. The sun was very hot and with not a cloud in the sky it was easy to get bad sunburn, so the shelter was essential. Next, we got a generator set up and a trap vertical, and finally a station. Using a barefoot FT990 we put out the first tentative CQ on 21MHz and, surprise, surprise, a pile-up came straight back! The first QSOs that I have in the computer logs were at 1055Z on the 18th September. First in the log was YB0ARF on 21MHz, followed very closely by UZ3MWD, OH2BGD and a

veritable pile of EU stations. we were under way at last!

The next day we built the monobanders and two more stations which we equipped with linear amplifiers, and we were all set. At the peak we had five stations constructed although it proved a little difficult to use them all simultaneously due to excessive RF flying around the tiny island. Indeed, on some occasions it was possible to get RF burns off the coaxes of antennas that weren't connected! This was probably as much as anything else because of the practical difficulties of getting a good RF ground.

At the peak of our operation, we had five FT990s, three of them with linears, monobanders for 14 and 21MHz, tribanders, many trapped verticals and a Gap vertical for the LF bands. We had three generators, although early on in the expedition we suffered another generator failure, and so were reduced to only two generators for the remainder of the trip.

To begin with, operations were from two tents, one of which was so diminutive that the plan to get two stations into it was finally dispensed with. This tent became known as the 6m tent, not because there was any operation from it on 6m, but because of the tent poles it came with. I am fairly accustomed to putting up tents of all shapes and sizes, but this one had me stumped until we suddenly realised that the poles supplied were actually a 6m beam and nothing to do with the tent at all! Obviously the Amateur that Bill had borrowed it from had managed to pick up a likely looking pile of aluminium thinking it was the tent poles... Oh well... some lashings that



would make any Scout proud soon solved the problem, and that together with ropes and long stakes finally convinced the tent to stay up.

The other tent was more of a success. It was large enough to get two stations in and being brand new was actually complete. The only problem was that it came with silly little six inch pegs that simply did nothing in the coral. We ended up lashing ropes over the top of the tent and securing them to the ground using 3 foot long stakes.

By the time we'd finished we had the following:

#### Transceivers

5 off FT990s

#### Linear amps

2 off FL7000, 1 off 1kw valve linear

#### Antennas

3 ele monobander for 14MHz at 25'

4 ele monobander for 21MHz at 25'

3 ele tribander for 14/21/28MHz at 30'

3 ele tribander for 18/24MHz at 40' on a lattice tower

Dipole for 10MHz at 40' on the lattice tower

Gap vertical for 1.8/3.5/7/14MHz (Only used on 1.8/3.5/7)

HF2V (2 off)

HF6V

7 band vertical

7MHz wire dipole at 30'

#### Logging

4 off PC computers

Paper logs used by other Ops.

## The operating

Was fun! There is something quite exhilarating to be able to go onto a seemingly dead band, put out one CQ and have half a dozen calls, with a pileup after the first three QSOs. It is staggering how quickly people catch on, helped no doubt by Cluster and other DX announcing systems.

Very early on we realised that we could, to all practical intents and purposes, work JA any time we wanted to. So it became a challenge *not to*! Indeed, the expedition motto, if we had one, must have been "Let's not work a JA today!". However, it is certainly a fact of life that there are an awful lot of them, and so we certainly had to give them a fair crack. As the beam heading to JA was much the same as that for EU, we had the disadvantage that JA would be very loud when we tried to work EU. Conversely, we had the advantage that we could keep an ear open for the openings to EU, whilst working JAs.

Another thing we recognised early on was that there was no way we could usefully stick to the original schedule that Steve had put so much work into preparing. During the night there was usually no point in keeping more than two stations operational as there simply was not enough propagation: not even to JA to keep the others going. From day two the operator schedules were therefore pretty ad-hoc, although as it turned out we all ended up with similar QSO counts at the end.

About 3 days into mission, we thought it would be interesting to see how many QSOs we had made. Here the computers

really came into their own, as we were instantly able to tell not just the numbers, but also the split between JA, EU, USA and so on. Of course only 50% of the QSOs were being logged to computer so our analysis had to be based on those QSOs only, but when we added up the QSOs on the paper logs as well, we were please to find we were already at 14000 QSOs.

From then on, I made sure that we did a count of the paper QSOs and added in the computer QSOs each day. It was good to see that the DXpedition was consistently making about 6000 QSOs per day, and we started to think in terms of 50k QSOs for the expedition in total. This would, indeed be a good result, for the highest total of previous DXpeditions to VK9M had been just 30k QSOs.

## Getting to EU

Interesting how EU opens to VK9M. About one hour after dawn at the EU end, signals would start coming in on 14 or 21MHz. Signals would always start coming in first from OH, SP and UA3, then gradually work across the remainder of EU during the day. So what would happen is that I would work JAs until about 0800Z, at which time I would start doing stand-bys for EU. Generally the first few would yield no QSOs, but gradually I would hear signals coming out of the noise. At that stage, I always told JA to stand by, and generally that is what they did.

It might surprise you to know that even the Japanese sometimes break the rules. Most times when I would ask JA to stand by, I would get two or three who continued to call. With JA being S9 plus lots, and EU down on the noise floor, it

didn't take many of these to render communications with EU impossible. I finally discovered a foolproof method of stopping this: I went back to the offending JAs with their full call, and sent QSY, not in log. The shame of this must have been just too much, for they never called again!

Anyway, back to EU. Working EU is always a lively experience. The combination of some 50 countries all competing with one another together with the great cultural differences found across EU means that EU pileups are tough to manage. I've heard all sorts of stories, as I am sure you have, about just how bad EU is in pile-ups, and there is no doubt that some of what is said is true. Conversely, I had dreadful difficulties with NA from time to time, and even JA was not as exemplary as I had been led to believe they would be. Maybe it's just that EU was a long way away and I didn't hear the worst of what was going on.

Personally I found EU a lot of fun. It was challenging and very satisfying when I did get the pileup to behave. Unfortunately one of our operators, Bill, VK4CRR found the EU pileups too much and developed a tendency to bellow at the pileup and then go QRT. I'm sorry if your enjoyment of the chase was spoiled by this: it really was just one operator, honest.

For myself, I can say that I found EU behaved better than I had been led to expect. I found that I could keep up an average of 180 QSOs per hour to EU when the band was open, and in fairness I must say that I could do only slightly better running JAs at S9+20. On one



occasion towards the end of the DXpedition, I worked 1000 EU QSOs on 21MHz CW in a six hour sitting. It was great fun, and I hope I gave you a QSO!

## **Band reports**

Looking through the logs that I have on computer, some 22,500 of them, or just over half of all the QSOs the DXpedition made, the following band reports are offered:

### **1.8MHz**

This band didn't produce any QSOs to EU. This is probably not that surprising, though we did try very hard. We did work JA (of course), VK, ZL and west coast USA. On the DX front, we worked no less than two P29 stations!

### **3.5MHz**

There were some reasonable openings to EU although they were short lived. G stations worked included G3KMA, G3MCS, G3OZF, G3PCG, G4GIR and G4PEL. There was also a good spread of DLs, and Is. Best times were around 1600 to 1800Z.

### **7.0MHz**

Some excellent openings, with the band typically open between around 0600 to 0800Z and again at 1600 to 2100Z. Most QSOs were made in the evening slot. I and DL stations were the loudest, with OH also well represented. G tended to come in late in the opening, as we might reasonably expect, and some signals were very strong indeed.

### **10MHz**

For some reason this band was hard work to EU. I remember particularly getting up at 0400 local one morning (1800Z) and spending 3 hours trying to work EU. Yes, the signals did peak up just after our dawn, at about 2100Z, but they didn't stay good for very long, and every QSO was like pulling teeth! Nevertheless, several dozen QSOs were recorded with G stations, generally between 0600-0800Z and 1700-2100Z. G3MXJ was worked at 1514Z in what would have been broad daylight here in the UK!

### **14MHz**

This band produced one of my two big sessions to EU. Other operators also had lengthy openings and we really did try our best to optimise the EU QSO rate. Over 100 QSOs were had with G stations, generally between 0500-1400Z. In one such session, I worked almost 1000 QSOs on CW. I know that Steve, P29DX had similar extended openings to EU on this band.

### **18MHz**

For no particular reason, I did very little operating on this band. However, Ken, V73C did much work there and had a number of good openings into EU. Best times were around 1000-1300Z, so openings were rather short. Other parts of EU were worked up to 1500Z, but no EU outside those times at all.

### **21MHz**

This was the other band that I made a great deal of EU QSOs on. Like 14MHz, I had a long session working exclusively

EU, and this yielded over 1000 QSOs in one sitting. Signals were generally weaker than they were on 14MHz, though there were some definite exceptions: G3OUF and G3XTT came piling through like a ton of bricks, for example.

**24MHz**

I did a little operating on this band, but precious few QSOs to EU resulted. Other members of the DXpedition were more fortunate, with Ken, V73C, in particular, making a good number of QSOs. The computer logs only show G QSOs with G3FPQ, G3OHN, G4BWP, G4GIR and GW3AHN, between 0900 and 0930Z, though I am sure more QSOs were made by the non computer logging members of the DXpedition. Certainly the openings to EU were few and far between, and of short duration.

**28MHz**

This band was tough to work EU on. The computerised logs only shows G3OZF at 0916, though I am sure there were more in the paper logs. Most of our QSOs were with JA and west coast USA. Curiously, there were also four XEs in a relatively short list of DX QSOs.

**50MHz**

We had a 10W 50MHz transmitter, running to a six (I think) element yagi. It was on for most of our stay on Mellish. Because of the general lack of activity/propagation, we mainly operated the station as a beacon, alternating between beaming to JA (and therefore also EU) and VK. We did have a few QSOs into VK, but non elsewhere that I was aware of. Did you hear our beacon?

**Some statistics**

All QSOs	QSOs	Percentage
Total number of QSOs	44,500	100%
Number of CW QSOs	21671	48%
Number of SSB QSOs	22033	49%
Number of RTTY QSOs	1296	3%
QSOs to EU	9476	21%
QSOs to NA	14293	32%
QSOs to JA	16059	36%
QSOs to rest of world	5172	11%

**European QSOs**

21.06% of QSOs were with EU. Below is the split between the countries. I have shown the actual number of QSOs, the percentage per country relative to the number of QSOs



with EU as a whole, and finally the overall percentage relative to the total QSO count for the DXpedition. As you can see, G fared reasonably well.

Country	QSOs	EU %	Overall %
I	1794	18.93%	3.99%
UA3	1199	12.65%	2.66%
OH	1174	12.39%	2.61%
DL	908	9.58%	2.02%
<b>G, GD,GI, GJ, GM, GU, GW</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>8.37%</b>	<b>1.76%</b>
F	580	6.12%	1.29%
SM	530	5.60%	1.18%
SP	465	4.91%	1.03%
EA	412	4.34%	0.91%
OZ	412	4.34%	0.91%
ON	266	2.81%	0.59%
OK	247	2.61%	0.55%
HB	134	1.41%	0.30%
LZ	98	1.03%	0.22%
YU etc.	82	1.03%	0.22%
The rest	383	4.04%	0.85%

### QSOs by band

#### Band QSOs Percentage

1.8	103	0.23%
3.5	1808	4.01%
7	2234	4.97%
10.1	3293	7.32%
14	12618	28.04%
18	6824	15.16%
21	11910	26.47%
24.9	2032	4.51%
28	4184	9.30%

### More in life than Ham Radio!

Of course, there was time for non Amateur Radio activities. As a general rule we could only run four stations simultaneously, and quite often propagation meant that we were down to three or even two bands that could be

worked. Of course there was this enormous island to explore, so that's what we did!

### A tour around the island

The island is about 600m long, so it was hardly a major expedition, but it's quite surprising what you can find in such a

small area, when you've got the time to go looking for it.

On the northern end of the island, where we had set up the stations, there is relatively little vegetation. The coral cay slopes gently down to a flat ledge which is only about 1m above the high tide level. This area sports a few nesting booby birds, but not all that many, and we were soon to discover that the major population of that part of the island was sand crabs.

After an all night session early on in the expedition, I was wandering along this bit of the cay, intent on obeying a call of nature, when I was intrigued to see hundreds of small mounds of sand, as if made by moles. Further investigation revealed that by each mound there was a hole of anything up to 5 inches in diameter, but apparently no indication as to how it had been made. I pondered this off and on during the following day, and that evening, almost immediately after it got dark, the answer presented itself. Standing by the water's edge, I suddenly noticed that the sand in front of me was slowly moving! Seconds later, a claw popped out, followed by another and a moment later the head of a black and white coloured crab. Oblivious of my presence, it then proceeded to scour out the hole, before returning to lurk just inside its new lair, presumably awaiting its evening's meal happening by. Sometimes, these crabs would move considerable distances away from their sand hole, and they could certainly make some speed across the broken coral. We saw crabs as small as 1 inch across and up to 6 inches. They never came out during the day, presumably it's too hot for them, and they didn't cause us any problems unlike some other expeditions to coral reefs.

Walking along the western edge of the island, towards the southern end, there was

an enormous piece of coral just laying on the beach. Some 3 feet high and 5 across, it was far too heavy for me to budge, and one can only wonder at the stormy forces that could dislodge such a large piece from the sea bed and hurl it up onto the beach. The sun had completely bleached it to pure white: a fascinating site.

Continuing on our tour, there was a large log lying on the ground, presumably flotsam from some passing ship, and this turned out to be the home for hundreds of hermit crabs. Just moving the log slightly would result in much scrabbling and scraping as these weird creatures tried to get back under the shelter from the sun. About the size of your hand, these crabs have a shell in which they hide from predators. Bright red claws, looking and moving like the fingers of your hand move slowly and deliberately in pursuit of their prey. From time to time we saw these crabs out in the open, but again they caused us no problem.

Right at the southern tip of the island was a real surprise. A dug out canoe! Only about 6 feet long, and barely wide enough for a child to get into, one can only speculate how this could ever have got to VK9M land. Once it got there, however, it became the home, hardly surprisingly, for another hundred or so hermit crabs!

From the southern end of Mellish, the outer coral reef is clearly visible, something like 2 miles distant. Looking just like the edge of an island encircling our cay, what we were actually seeing was the water breaking on the reef where it just pops up above the surface. Of course this was most noticeable at low tide, when more of the reef was exposed. Inside the reef the water was a brilliant turquoise, whilst beyond the outer reef it was the dark blue of the deep ocean.



Continuing round the southern end of the island, and heading north again along the eastern edge, we came into bird territory. And what a tremendous din they all make! Just about every stage of the life cycle of these birds is here to see. There were many young, some as small as 1 inch high and not yet able to fly, and at the other end of the scale there was the continual screeching and circling of the adult birds. Those of us brave enough to travel into this area would be rewarded with hundreds of the adults taking off simultaneously and dive bombing us continually. They never came closer than about 2 feet away, but it was clear enough that they weren't too impressed with 8 humans coming and taking over their island!

We also saw dolphins and sting rays in the water, though curiously we did not find many small fish close to the island. On one occasion Rick caught a fish that none of us could recognise, about 18 inches long so they were obviously there.

### **DXpedition junk**

To our utter amazement and disgust, we discovered a pile of junk left a previous DXpedition! Perhaps the worst aspect of this was several hundred feet of wire that had obviously been used as radials for a vertical, but which had become all tangled no doubt due to birds getting caught up in the stuff.

We also discovered bottles, cans, and other indications that, if nothing else the participants didn't go thirsty! I collected all this paraphernalia into a big pile and we removed it from the island as we left. I can truthfully say that we left the island without any signs that either us, or any previous DXpedition had ever been there. Why can't others do likewise?

### **The storm gathers**

The first few days of the DXpedition were superb. Cloudless skies by day, and mild starlit nights: a veritable desert island paradise! As the week progressed however, the weather gradually deteriorated. The wind became progressively stronger and stronger, and one night it actually rained. In fact it rained very hard, and we discovered that the tents let some of it in!

Gradually, the expedition was forced to fortify the main camp area against the wind. Various ingenious techniques were used, including using one of the boats as a wind shield and the oars as roof struts, but still the wind got stronger. Eventually, we were forced to close down the two satellite tents where the stations had been based and move everything under the one, by now heavily fortified roof of the main camp. This was both good and bad: good in the sense that we could all keep in touch with one another making cross band skeds and QRM management easier, but bad in that there was just too much going on in too small an area.

Bill's SSB operation in particular became a source of difficulty at this stage as we all became convinced that he had no real need for a microphone(!), but with four stations in an area about 5 metres square it would have been a struggle even if everyone had been on CW with the cans on!

### **A hasty retreat**

On the morning of 27th September, after just over 8 days of operation, we were starting to think in terms of clearing the site down. After 44,500 QSOs, we wanted to get equipment that we would not be needing any more off the island and thereby reduce the number of trips needed to the

yacht when we finally did leave the island for good.

So it was then that we closed down all the stations, telling the pile-up of JAs and West coast USA that we'd be back in an hour after we had moved all the stations into a single tent. The plan was that as we no longer required sleeping accommodation on the island, we could put three stations in the sleeping tent and dismantle the remainder. Non operating staff could then take the majority of the equipment back to the yacht in comparatively slow time.

Unfortunately, half way through this operation, and with all stations closed down, we got a report of severe weather expected in the area within the next 12 hours, so the snap decision was taken to close down for good and ship all the kit out as soon as possible. It should be noted that the alternative was that the yacht would go off-shore, outside of the reef and some 5 miles away, and that the weather warning suggested that there was a good chance that the winds would be strong enough to whip up the water to totally submerge VK9MM. We decided unanimously, for once, that getting off the island was a good idea.

The next four hours saw the most frenetic activity as we packed an entire DXpedition up and shipped it back to the yacht. In hindsight it was a remarkable piece of co-operative work with the two zodiac's continually ploughing back and forth between the island and the yacht. Yours truly was in the last party off the island, and with the strengthening wind we were absolutely drenched within seconds of leaving the island. What a change from the idyllic conditions that had heralded our arrival!

Less than 50 yards from the yacht, the outboard in our zodiac unexpectedly cut out. Suddenly, far from heading for safety, we were drifting back to the island! Pull as we might, the engine wouldn't start, and eventually Rick got into the other Zodiac and headed out towards us to give us a tow, just in time for WA4DAN to discover that the fuel line had become disconnected. Finally we, and all our kit were back on Nina Q1. It was 4pm, with dark clouds all around an ominous sign of uncomfortable times ahead.

The next challenge was to get out of the reef area and into deep water. Naturally Gerry, our Skipper, was concerned that we were in less than 5m of water, and wanted to get outside the reef before the storm really started. So whilst Gerry and Rick navigated their way through the maze of coral heads, Gerry at the helm and Rick half way up the mast on lookout, the rest of us busied ourselves with securing all the equipment on deck and below. We had just about finished that considerable task when we finally got clear of the reef and were at last able to get some speed up.

### **I don't feel very well!**

It is amazing how much the reef calms the water! We had hardly got clear of it and the yacht started frantically rolling and yawing, and we all started getting sea sick. I guess I was less affected than most of the team, but I still felt pretty grotty for most of the three days it took to get back to the mainland.

The seas were so rough that on the first night Gerry the Skipper decided to heave to, so for 8 hours we drifted with the waves, getting further away from the mainland rather than closer. Later, he confided that he had been genuinely concerned with so much weight on board that serious damage could have happened



to the boat or its cargo (us!) had we missed a wave crest and crashed down into a trough. We all hated that night: if there is one thing worse than clipping through the waves at speed, it is the slow rolling motion that comes when you are drifting with the sea.

The winds were certainly strong enough for us to sail. I'm sure that the seafaring fraternity would consider it marvellous, but I confess that the sight of sheets of water spraying all over the decks, the yacht rolling so far that the deck itself was often partially submerged and seas all round higher than the yacht itself did not do much for this particular land lubber! I resolved to retire to a horizontal position below decks and remain there until the world settled down somewhat.

Others approached the problem in their own ways. Bill, VK4CRR, decided to stay up on deck for the entire voyage, wrapped in as much warm clothing as he could find. I think he didn't move more than six inches during the entire trip. Vince and Ken, in particular, spent long periods of time at the helm doing their best to ride the waves and avoid soaking us any more than necessary. Others of us stood watches as and when we felt well enough to do so.

By the end of the second day, I was starting to get my sea legs and felt like a little something to eat. Once I started eating I suddenly realised how hungry I had become having not really had anything for almost 3 days. Gradually the seas calmed and a day later saw some semblance of normality return, with the usual banter and the inevitable question: Where do we go next?

After three days we were inside the Great Barrier Reef, and calm finally returned. We were all tired, dirty, hungry and in need of

civilisation, so we radioed ahead to Fraser Island and the Kingfisher resort in search of overnight accommodation.

## Fraser Island

No, they didn't have enough spare rooms for us at such short notice. After much haggling, they did relent, and we had the accommodation we needed and it would cost us the princely sum of \$A170 each for the night. No contest! We booked in and ordered a meal for our arrival.

We finally arrived at Fraser Island at 10pm, and caught the courtesy bus for the short ride to the hotel. After a much needed shower and shave, we headed off for eats and found that the hotel had really done us proud with an amazing spread of food, and all for the princely sum of \$A10. When we had finished gorging ourselves the Americans suddenly discovered a predilection for ice cream, which at 0100 in the morning they managed to find a source of! Well, who were we Brits to argue, so we all had ice cream to round off our midnight feast.

## The Expedition's return

After a decent night's sleep we all felt much refreshed and were able to really enjoy the last stage of the journey by yacht from Fraser Island to Tin Can Bay. Getting into the bay was somewhat interesting as we hit it close to low tide, and there was barely sufficient water for the fully laden Nina Q1.

At 1400 we finally made it and it was time to unload everything from the yacht. Of course it was now absolutely sweltering again, and it was a real struggle getting the three tons of kit off the Nina Q1 and into the waiting truck. Eventually it was done, we bade farewell to our crew, Gerry and Rick, and headed back towards Gympie in

a veritable convoy of vehicles. It had been agreed that I would be staying with Kerry, VK4MZ, and so it was that I travelled back to his QTH with his daughter, Caroline, for a brief relax before heading back to Bill, VK4CRR's house to help with unloading the truck.

## **VK4MZ**

After all the rush and hard work of the expedition, it was a real relief to relax for a couple of days with Kerry and his wife Claire. It was a delight to discover that both had visited the UK before and were very interested in English culture and countryside. I, for my part was keen to find out more about Australia, it being my first ever visit to the continent, and so a couple of evenings of enjoyable conversation were guaranteed.

Kerry also has a pretty impressive shack, with a five (yes, five) element beam for 40m up at about 100 feet. So it wasn't long before we gravitated down to the inner sanctum and I was setting up my key ready for a few QSOs back to UK. Kerry is a 100% SSB operator, so the sudden appearance of his call at 30WPM on CW caused some interesting questions amongst the VK populace, but soon they got used to me and the time was right to try out that huge beam on EU.

Sure enough, it didn't take long to find my first G. And who should it be? None other than G4FOC, at the FOC dinner at Lords. Of course, it was Lords weekend! We exchanged a few overs during which 73's were passed on to all at the big gathering, and it was on to the next QSO. I am distinctly envious of that beam! We could actually hear EU in the middle of the afternoon, loud and clear.

The following day we went into downtown Gympie to hire me a car. I had decided that I wanted to use the 5 days or so before my flight back to explore a little of Australia, and so it was that I ended up with a Nissan something or other, automatic, air conditioning, the works, for the princely sum of \$A40 per day. Petrol turned out to be something it didn't need all that much of, but anyway it was only 60c a litre so what the heck, let's get motoring!

## **It's grockle time!**

I bade farewell to Kerry and Claire on Sunday 3 October and headed down to the Glass House Mountains, some 80 miles to the south of Gympie. On our way up from Brisbane Airport at the start of the expedition, we had travelled through this area, and I had made a mental note that I wanted to see more of it.

At this stage, I suppose I should tell you that my other great relaxation in life is mountaineering. So it will come as no great surprise that I wanted to climb a few hills, particularly given the limited scope for such things on Mellish. I didn't really have the requisite equipment for anything serious, but I felt that a few scrambles were definitely in order.

After an evening in a Motel close to the mountains, I was up bright and early with a marvellous day and half a dozen or so peaks beckoning me on. Actually they turned out to be harder than they looked, but I still managed to climb 4 of them, each some 1500 feet high and involving some scrambling for the final assault.

I also visited several of the seaside resorts on the sunshine coast, including Noosa which is a beautiful sandy bay some 2 miles in length, one of a great many in the area. Then I headed south with the vague



idea that I might head down towards Sydney to see the opera house and visit Barry, VK2BJ. This idea got shelved as I was unable to contact Barry in time. I also discovered just how far it is to Sydney and decided that I wouldn't really have time anyway, so instead I headed inland to Toowoomba and saw something of the countryside of Queensland. After a night in Toowoomba it was on to the Bunya mountain range for some more yomping and a splendid couple of days spent in a mountain retreat right up on the top of the range at some 5000 feet ASL.

Something that it's hard to come to terms with is finding rain forests on top of the mountains. The Bunya mountain range is very extensive and sports a bewildering range of wildlife, including, of course more wallabies (small kangaroos) than you can comfortably count, and the huge Bunya pine trees that live for 500 years or more and grow to a height of 200 feet. Here was excellent walking, and I covered some 40 miles over the two days I was there.

## Homewards bound

Eventually it was time to head home, so I meandered my way back to Brisbane airport, returned the car and waited for my flight to Singapore. It is during a daytime flight that you get to see just how big the Australian continent is. For hour upon hour we crossed the outback. The visibility was perfect and I could see the occasional tracks and other evidence of man's influence on the land, but this was indeed sparsely populated country.

At length we arrived at Singapore, where I was surprised and delighted to meet up with Atsu, VK2BEX, who was en-route to Sweden on a business trip. We chatted over a beer or two, and then it was time for me to catch the flight to London.

Unfortunately, during take-off we suffered an engine failure. Nobody noticed, for the take-off was smooth and uneventful, but I rather suspect that the flight crew might tell you another story! Anyway, we had to circle around the harbour dumping fuel as we were too heavy to land, and finally land again at Singapore.

Fortunately, it only took them about 4 hours to fix the problem, but it was still 0200 before we taxied off for our second attempt at getting back to London. Happily, the remainder of the flight was uneventful and suitably blurred by the copious quantities of booze that Qantas decided to ply us with along the way. Back in London I was met at noon by Dave G4AOL, who immediately pronounced that I looked like I needed a pint of English Ale. Who was I to argue?

## Some personal thoughts

This was the first time that I had been on a DXpedition of this scale. I will certainly do another one some time fairly soon as I think I've got hooked on pileups. This has been commented on before by Roger G3SXW and I now see just what he means.

In many respects the DXpedition was a success. Despite rather rough weather towards the end, we all got off the island safely and apart from some sea sickness were none the worse for our experiences. We made 44,500 QSOs in 8 days which is respectable, and notwithstanding some of the comments I have since heard, here in the UK, a large number of them were with EU. I know that I worked quite a number of G stations with just 100 watts to wire antennas, so whilst we didn't get to the bottom of the EU pile-up because the openings simply weren't there for long enough, we certainly made a big dent in them. I personally made 6001 QSOs, all on CW from Mellish. This is an average of

750 per day for each day we were there. That's certainly the most QSOs I have ever made in 8 days!

I have heard some comments that we were very weak in EU. Well, I can assure you that most of the time EU was very weak in VK9M! Propagation certainly was marginal for much of the time, and the openings were usually pretty short. However, when I came back to England, I took a look at Cluster and found in excess of 200 spots for VK9MM with spots on every band from 3.5 to 28MHz. This is more than there were for VP8SSI, although, of course there were less Cluster users then. I think the number of spots is a pretty good indicator of the success of an Expedition, so on that basis it can't have all been bad.

One of the things that did not work out so well was the team leadership. I believe that if you bring together a group of experienced Amateurs then the way to manage them is by consensus. Decisions are decisions of the team. Unfortunately this was not the case, and there were several occasions when dictatorial tactics were being used. You may have heard some evidence of this when the individual concerned was on the air! We did muse at one stage that this DXpedition could be the first to be disallowed on the basis of bad language on the air, but I assure you it was one person only who indulged in its use.

On one occasion the whole expedition was summarily closed down in the middle of a pile-up, by the expedient of turning off the generators(!) simply in order to get supplies that were not yet needed onto the island. This led to some conflict, and when you are on an island as small as Mellish, it's kind of hard to get away from it.

What I learned from this DXpedition is that it is very hard to bring together a pile of people who haven't worked together before and expect everything to just fall into place. Here again, I have to agree with Roger SXW about the importance of knowing and respecting your fellow operators before you undertake to spend a couple of weeks with them in some tiny corner of the globe. Expeditions of this kind are also extremely hard work, with considerable stress, lack of sleep and issues of simple survival. It's not surprising then that tempers get a little frayed, and the DXpedition leadership has to recognise this tendency and work to minimise its impact.

On the other hand, I met up with a great bunch of people on this DXpedition and I feel sure that some of us will come together again for another one some time soon. Indeed, there are already some tentative plans being hatched, but more of that anon.

DXpeditions like this are very costly to the participants. I reckon I spent the better part of £2000 in total and were it not for the many generous donations to the DXpedition, then costs would have been even higher. I am very grateful to CDXC, the RSGB, DXNS and my own Club, Reading and District ARC for their support.

Now, where **do** we go next?  
73, John, G3WGV.

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## **SPONSORED TANDEM PARACHUTE JUMP Roy Andreang, G4CMT**

*(Ed: The following is NOT a DX story. It's the story of the exploits of a CDXC member who went to extraordinary lengths, and put himself in some personal danger, to raise funds for a radio shack*



*for the training of Scouters, Scouts, and Guides, in the skills of Amateur Radio).*

Hi, all! I did promise your editor, Alan, G3PMR, that I would write an account of my last "jump" at the age of 69¾ years. You will have seen the "sponsor" letter printed in full in a recent CDXC Newsletter, to my big surprise. I am not known to be a letter writer, unlike my reputation for talking! (*Ed: Roy is the Town Crier for Hull!*) I know that the editor would like this on disc, but I only have a dumb terminal. However, I will *do my best*, which of course, is the scout promise.

I suppose the story should start in 1979, on my 55th year and *first* parachute jump of my life. I took advice, as far as I could, but no one seemed to have any idea of "parachute operating", including the authorities, who at first seemed to think it was illegal, but, after a few hours of consultation, and going through the *licence conditions* agreed that there was nothing to stop me!. Also, because I would be falling, and not stationary, it was agreed that I should use the call sign G4CMT/Parachute Mobile.

Student jumpers only drop from 2,500' agl, but I was allowed to go another 1,000' to 3,500', as it takes 500' for the 'chute to open. Coming down to the radio gear, I was going to use an IC240, but Jack Tweedy, G??? kindly loaned me an FT202 hand held, with 6" whip (which in those days was an innovation). I had it strapped just above my reserve parachute on my chest. The mic was tucked inside my parachute suit top.

My training took six hours, but due to unsuitable WX (the ground speed must not exceed 12MPH for students), I paid many visits to Bridlington airfield, and I finally jumped at 11.30 AM on April 7th 1979,

one day after my 55th birthday. I called G4CMT/PM to my control station G3RDM/M (Tom, now a silent key, alas). In 85 seconds, I made 13 two meter QSOs (*Ed: a budding contest op here!*). Although I did not know it at the time this was the first *official* parachute mobile operation from the UK, and raised around £750 for the local church, scouts, and guides. I was one of two church wardens of time, prompting the Bishop of Hull to remark that I had been nearer to God than he had!

Two weeks later, my assistant scout leader pointed out that if I made 5 jumps in all, I would qualify for my Scout "Wings", which is quite rare, so I arranged four more drops. The second and third drops were in darkness, which, actually, I did not fancy at all, to be honest! I made approximately six QSOs per drop - Dundee Radio Society being the best DX, on 2m, using 1W to a 6" whip. I would like to mention that the QRP Club has sponsored me every time I jumped, including the last one. After I was presented with my scout wings in June 1979, I thought that that was it! By this time I was giving talks to various scout troops, youth clubs etc. I might mention that the parachute suit that I had used for the five jumps had been loaned by the Leconfield RAF Rescue Squadron - a dull green type. Very soon after this, I got a call from the Swindon Parachute Club - they had a spare suit in a real dayglow colour, which I snapped up for £20.

On my next visit to a scout troop, wearing, of course, my new suit, a little lad asked whether that was the suit I wore for my last jump. I had to admit that it wasn't, but soon remedied that by making my sixth jump, and giving me the chance to wear all my badges and wings etc. on my own suit. All this occurred over a four month period April-July 1979. I made 2m QSOs on every jump, and on one I also made 70cm



QSOs (yes - I had two rigs; there were no dual banders in those days!). By this time, familiarity had taken over! 1 more jump would be made wearing my badges - yes you have guessed - I couldn't bear to be parted from my parachute radio gear! Now for my 7th jump! (*Ed: to cut a long story short, Roy made his 7th jump in July '79, and unfortunately injured his spine, and had to remain horizontal for several weeks*). Eight years later, I made my eighth jump, with Chief Scout John Fogg (G3PFZ) on the ground, I jumped from 16,000' ASL with the RAF Parachute Team from RAF Weston-on-the-Green. I had a FT290 II strapped to my chest, and a morse key on each thigh. I used the call GB4CMT/PM. Now for the last one - my ninth jump, which took place on 18th September 1993 at RAF Topcliffe Nr. Ripon, N. Yorks. The rig was a Kenwood 180B, kindly loaned by Peter Rodmell Communications, running 3 watts to a 6" whip. Peter Sheppard G4EJP was my ground control station. After an eight hour wait, we at last took off in an Islander aircraft, and jumped at 12,000'. During my first QSO, which was dedicated to my first control, Tom, G3RDM, I had to QRT as I was slipping in my harness!. I eventually made 10 QSOs in 4½ minutes. A tape recording was made by two different stations, and all conditions of my licence were met and verified. On Tuesday 23rd November, 1993, in the presence of HRH The Duke of Kent, and The Chief Scout, a cheque for £1300 was handed to the County Commissioner for Humberside, as a result of this, my last jump. Many thanks to the two CDXC members who sent me a very helpful donation. 73 de Roy, G4CMT/PM.

## A Holiday in West Malaysia Neville Cheadle G3NUG

I recently returned from West Malaysia having combined a family holiday with a spot of operating from some of the rarer islands. Here's the story.

First hiccup - 50 kgs overweight at Heathrow. After some discussion (It's Visit Malaysia Year etc.) Malaysian Airlines agreed to waive the charge, an extremely useful precedent for the subsequent six flights!

Then to Kuala Lumpur to pick up the latest licence. No problems this time but getting the licence in the first place was quite a challenge and if any reader wants to obtain a 9M2 licence please give me a call.

Pangkor Is. AS-072 was our second stop, an island from which there has been no activity for about three years. Located about two-thirds up the west coast of West Malaysia, Pangkor is an extremely beautiful but very quite island mainly populated by fishermen. A very short airstrip was recently opened. There are several hotels on the island and we stayed at the Pan Pacific. Before we set out I had been very lucky to locate a SWL who worked in the hotel. He identified a suitable 2-bedroomed bungalow for us with a sitting room that was rapidly converted into the shack and the requisite palm trees were nearby.

My SWL friend turned out to be the head of the union at the hotel and within 1 hour of arriving nearly all the engineering department were helping to put up the aerials!

I used vertical radiating dipoles for 20m and 18m at about 45 feet and an R7 vertical



and the rig was the ultra reliable IC-735. Operating mainly in the early mornings and late evenings I worked about 600 stations during the six days and about 90% said this was their first contact with AS-072. Conditions were poor with a major solar flare half way through. The opening to Europe on 20m. was extremely short, about 2 hours between 1430 and 1630z. The other bands were very poor.

Next to Langkawi AS-058. Located just south of the Thai border this island is rapidly developing into a major tourist resort with some outstanding hotels. Again there had been no activity from here for about three years and we stayed at the Pelangi Beach Resort. It was here that the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference took place in 1989 and we stayed in the bungalow used by Margaret Thatcher. Her former study became the shack and I again got much help from the engineering department in putting up the aerials. The security people however were very inquisitive and I eventually discovered that the President of Albania was moving into the bungalow on one side of us and a Saudi prince was on the other side. Conditions were again poor with about 600 QSOs, about 90% again saying Langkawi was a new one for them and this time there were some good but very short openings to North America.

Finally to Penang, which lies between Pangkor and Langkawi and to the Rasa Sayang Resort, an old favourite of our family. The new wing here is about 150 yards from the sea and faces NW, the direction for Europe. The challenge was to fix the dipole on the highest point of the roofs about 140 feet above ground level. With considerable help from the engineering department and my catapult we eventually succeeded and the 20m.

VRD worked like a dream. We also put the R7 on the roof and in a short 12m. opening to Europe I managed to work G3FPQ, G3KMA, G3MCS, G3OUF, G4BWP and G4OBK amongst others. Conditions were much better for the two weeks in Penang and I worked 1800 stations, about 50% saying it was new one. This was surprising as there are about six resident stations active on HF. However they are located on the other side of the island away from the hotel area and there is a 3000 foot mountain between them and Europe. Indeed one of these stations who has a TH6 called one evening in the middle of a pile up to say he could only just hear the stations to which I was giving genuine S7 to S9 reports!

I had a get-together with several of the local stations and they showed great interest in IOTA and I am hopeful that they will activate some of the other islands. I suggested that they might like to think about instituting a Malaysian Islands Award and I am drafting up some rules for this. More about this in a later newsletter if it materialises.

So that's the story. The QSLs are printed, the labels run off and the many direct QSL requests, about 300 so far, will be cleared by the end of February. 73  
Neville

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## THAT's ALL FOR NOW!

This is a bumper issue of the Newsletter, mainly due to the epic stories of John, G3WGV, and Roger, G3SXW. Don't expect all future newsletters to be of this size! In fact, I suspect that the May issue will be rather small, so  
**CONTRIBUTIONS, PLEASE! 73,**  
**Alan, Jubb G3PMR**



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